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MAX
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**ISSUE
412**

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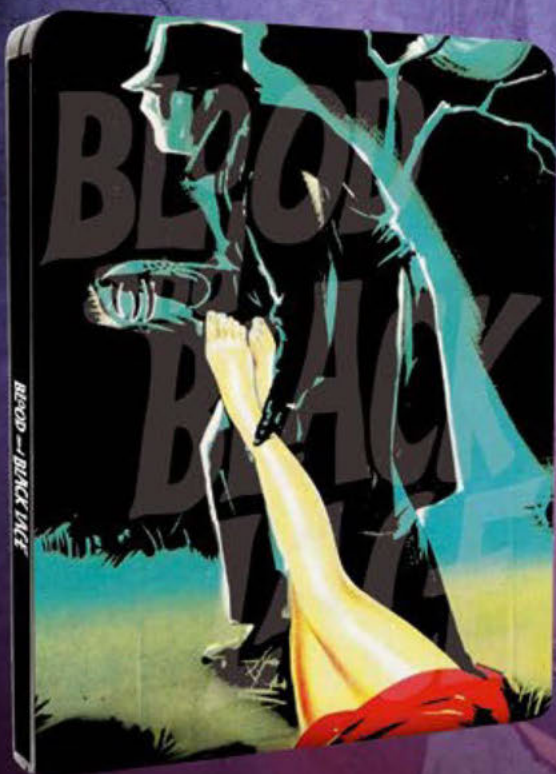


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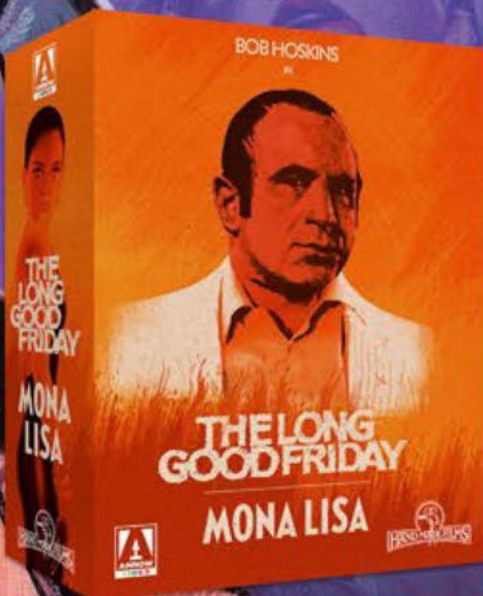
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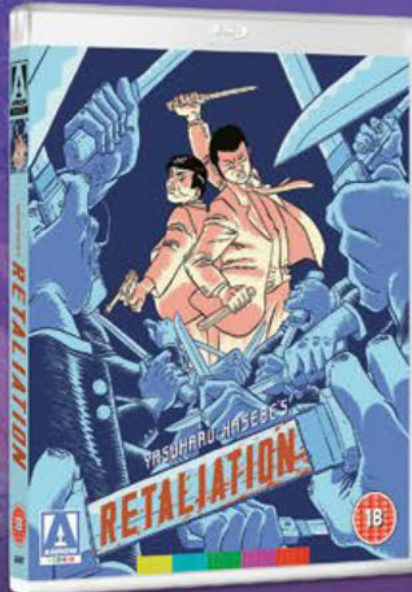
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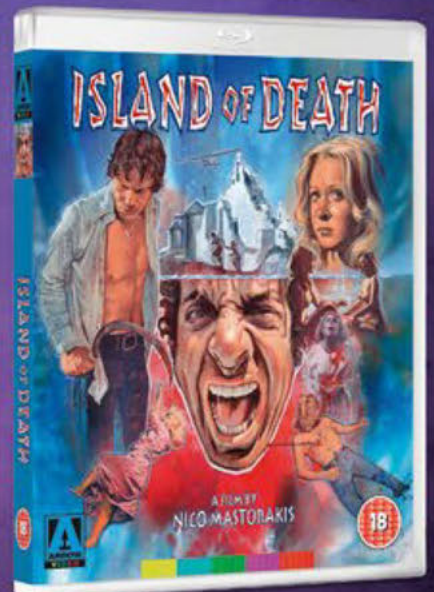
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CONTENTS



FEATURES

DON'T FEAR THE REAPER 8

We celebrate the life of Sir Terry Pratchett, legendary author and creator of the DISCWORLD universe, who recently passed away.

FASTER. FURIOUSER. MADDER. 14

A look ahead to MAD MAX: FURY ROAD.

IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS 20

THE ROAD WARRIOR is laid bare in our look back at the classic trilogy.

THE WARRIOR WOMAN RECALLS 24

FARSCAPE star VIRGINIA HEY shares her memories – and rare unseen photographs – of shooting MAD MAX 2.

MAD MEN 28

The two men to portray Max Rockatansky, superstars MEL GIBSON and TOM HARDY, are profiled.

FOUR WHEEL FRENZY 36

Buckle up! MAX sped onto the screen and led the way for a whole host of CARNAGE to follow... Find out more about the futuristic road tales.

GAMING TO THE MAX 42

The best – and worst – of the post-apocalyptic games influenced by George Miller's films.

CREEPY CARS 46

From HERBIE to CHRISTINE and beyond, those crazy vehicles with minds of their own.

GENRE DOWN UNDER 50

Discover even more varied and glorious delights from Australian cinema history.

HORRIFY ME 60

Our writer experiences the ultimate zombie makeover, plus a chance to WIN one for yourself!

LIVING LIFE A QUARTER MILE AT A TIME 68

You've seen the new film, now join us for a high-speed jaunt through the FAST & FURIOUS saga.

PLEASED TO EAT YOU 74

Whet your appetite with a look back at HANNIBAL as it returns to our screens.

INTERVIEW: BOB BAKER 98

Legendary writer and co-creator of DOCTOR WHO's K-9 tells us all about his novelisation of cult HTV series SKY.

INTERVIEW: BEN MURCH 116

We sit down with RODEO GAMES' co-founder to talk Tyranids, Space Marines and get the lowdown on DEATHWATCH: TYRANID INVASION



THINGS TO COME..... 10

BLUE BOX SECTION

OUTSIDE THE BOX..... 54

WATCHING DOCTOR WHO 56

GIRL FROM PLANET X..58

INDEPENDENTS DAY...63

CINEMA..... 79

DVD & BLU-RAY.... 83

AUDIO..... 90

BOOKS..... 92

COMICS..... 100

ANIME..... 108

GAMES..... 110

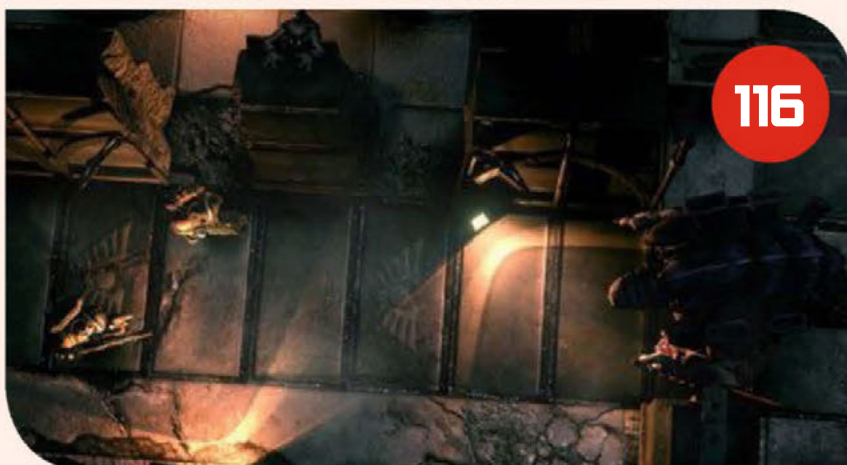
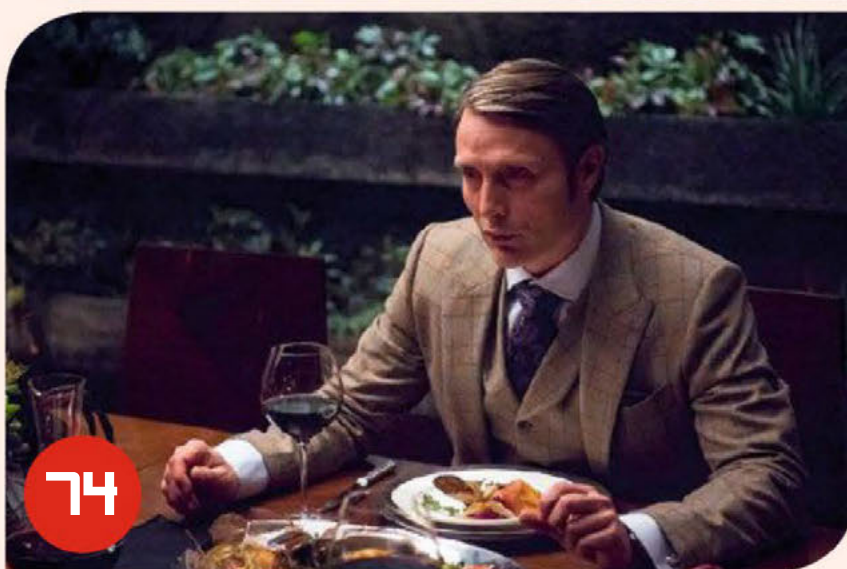
MERCHANDISE . . 122

EVENT PROFILE..... 124

TV ZONE..... 126

IT'S ONLY A MOVIE ..129

REGULARS



CONTENTS

STARBURST

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ISSUE
412

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 412!

I was a kid reading STARBURST Issue 44 way back in the prehistoric days of 1982. Shockingly, I read **It's Only a Movie** only to find Aussie controversialist John Brosnan actually gushing over an Australian movie. One he described as having, "no redeeming artistic quality whatsoever", but compensating by being, "an hour and a half of sheer blood curdling brutality". As if anyone could resist such an endorsement!

In fairness I do *still* find Australian movies to be a bit shit (except for the glitch that was **The Babadook**), but for one brief moment back in 1982, it actually appeared that genre cinema was about to be hijacked by an antipodean revolution, as **Mad Max 2** created the fantasy subgenre of the Road Warrior, and in doing so literally re-invented the wheel.

It speaks volumes that no one had much time for **Mad Max** before its party animal follow-up dragged all of us on board. **Mad Max 2** was such a game changer that the original movie was merely a VHS homework assignment that was intended to give a little background info.

Like Tolkien with **The Lord of the Rings**, George Miller had created a property that to this date has spawned spin-offs across all mediums. Even the badly received **Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome** failed to deliver the killing blow, and thirty-three years later George Miller is back with Tom Hardy's hands firmly on the post-apocalyptic steering wheel.

The expectation heaped upon **Mad Max: Fury Road** will only be surpassed by a little flick due out around Christmas time. It has to be both subversive and a crowd pleaser. Violent, yet packed with nostalgia. It's a tough gig but everyone at STARBURST is hoping George Miller can pull it off (to be clear we are rooting for a decent **Mad Max** revival, as we gave up on Australian cinema yonks ago!)

Despite devoting so much of the mag to a nostalgia-based road trip we also have overviews of the ridiculously successful **Fast and Furious** films as well as the **Hannibal** TV series, and all of your monthly columns of awesome goodies.

Remember if you are a STARBURST reader, then don't forget to hang out with us every Wednesday at 9pm on **Fab Radio International**, or subscribe to the show on iTunes. We want you guys on board. It's only fun if you are hanging out with us.

'Til next month,
Keep watching the weird and wonderful,


Jordan Royce
EDITOR



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STAR

REMEMBER

However inevitable, it's always horrible when a cinematic legend passes away, but I must admit to shedding a tear when we lost Leonard Nimoy. It's one of the realities of life that as we go older, our heroes die, at least they leave a legacy of films and television so generations to come can appreciate their talent. Thank you for marking this terribly sad event with such reverence and passion. The word is a sadder place without the great Mr Nimoy in it.

Charles, PORTSMOUTH

LETTER

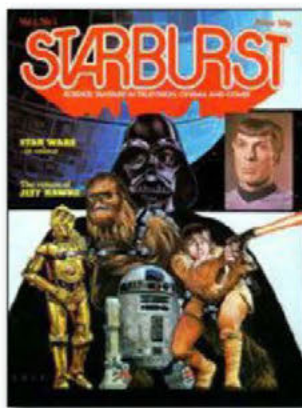
SPOCK ON

Livvy Boote's tribute to Leonard Nimoy was spot on. I'm surprised you didn't put his picture on the cover, in a little box out though. Loving the return of the comic strip and I appreciate you've got a bit of manga in the mag now as well. It's nice to see some TREK stuff in the mag, there was even a sneaky mention of Star Fleet Battles. Any chance of a STAR TREK special soon?

Dave, via EMAIL

For those of you who don't know what Dave is talking

about, see the editorial last month for the story behind why a photo of Spock sneaked onto the illustrated STAR WARS cover of STARBURST issue 1! There will certainly be a STAR TREK issue in the not too distant future, with of course plenty of everyone's favourite half-Vulcan, half-human!



AGE OF... C'MON!!

Great coverage of AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON in Issue 411! Thing is, it's taking an age to come out... You must have some kind of time machine lying around to make it April 23rd already, right?

Chloe, Oxfordshire

How did you know about our time machine!? Well as long as you readers keep it a secret, we'll make it so. By the time some of you are reading this, the Avengers will have assembled! Voila!

HOME BEFORE MIDNIGHT

I have to agree with your 5/10 review of the new CINDERELLA film. The kids dragged me to see this dreary dross because they'd be cast out of society or something like that if they didn't see the FROZEN short. I mean, why even bother splashing millions on a live action version when we all know the story and own the cartoon version on DVD? Please, STARBURST, recommend me some gruesome, gory horror to wash my brain of it. Something in which a kitten gets chainsawed to bits, you know.

Neil, via EMAIL

Officially we do not approve of any kittens being chainsawed, harmed in ANY way... or even given their least favourite flavour of cat food, BUT we have heard about a film which might be to your liking - The Texas Chain Saw MEOWsacre! That one may be a little hard to get hold of, so until then maybe check out our feature on HANNIBAL (p74), in prep for Season Three!

ABSOLUTE CULT

Hi guys (and gals), I was wondering what the current policy on subject matter is for the magazine, as the current issue has reviews of all sorts of films that are far from fantasy! I'm as open minded as the next geek, but surely 1930s war type films and 80s brat pack flicks are pushing it?

Pete, via EMAIL

Well, we believe in covering as much varied cult entertainment as possible. We're sorry that on this occasion the films were not the type you're used to seeing within the pages, but there's no denying that the output of brilliant DVD labels such as Eureka! transcend the usual boundaries of what we cover. Important classics, such as the war film you mention, and indeed the indisputable cult appeal of THE BREAKFAST CLUB mean we should cover them. Not everything can be comic, gore or space themed, however much we'd like it. We do make judgements on what we should or shouldn't cover quite often, and we can assure you it's not just a willy-nilly process.

MS.TAKEN IDENTITY

It was great to meet the STARBURST team at the London Super Comic-Con recently - lovely to see the happy, smiling faces behind the magazine (even if the smiles were covering the panic of having to get a mag out every month) and have a chat about our favourite comics. I was the one in the half-arsed Ms. Marvel cosplay - thanks for not commenting on how it had obviously been put together the night before... Hopefully see you next year!

Alex, via EMAIL

Happy smiling faces? You must have been at the wrong stall, there are no such people here at STARBURST! Only kidding! Yes we remember you really, how could we forget. It's always lovely to meet our readers, and all fellow geeks. So fantastic going to conventions as a nice break after the busy deadline week, we'll see you next year... if we recognise you in your chosen cosplay!

twitter 
@STARBURST_MAG

Our April Fool's Day story PETER JACKSON ADAPTING THE SILMARILLION AS A TRIO OF TRILOGIES prompted a mixed reaction...

@LesleyMusson: this is a massive book to transfer to the screen. Took me ages to read, very complicated.

@ATMiddleton: the tragic thing about that is it's probably true, you just don't know it yet.

@HereAdam: it hurts for the moment, I'm having to say it's not true so I don't get hurt

@MondoDan: very good, you had me for three paragraphs...

@chaffro: This is just cruel.

@TamponTom: only a matter of time!

@ParsonsFiction: Foolish April tale?

@vultureofrock: weak.

And someone had a blast from the past... (see #400 for the true story behind this writer!)

@whotoymansfield: do u recall Dr Sally Gary she wrote for ur mag yonks back



Winner: Frank Duffy. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.

STARBURST

NEXT ISSUE: 413 ON SALE FROM MAY 15TH

DON'T FEAR THE REAPER...

by Ed Fortune



Sir Terence David John "Terry" Pratchett touched the lives of millions around the world through his witty, clever and thoughtful writing. Primarily known for his work on the comic fantasy Discworld series, he will be remembered for a vast body of work, which included over 70 novels, several plays and a huge collection of essays and short stories. His writing style featured a unique sense of humour, each book thickly laced with jokes that ran from the painfully obvious to the deeply nerdy. His humanity and deep sense of right and wrong was clear on every page, and the world loved him for it.

The Beaconsfield-born author caught the science fiction and fantasy bug at a young age, during a time when genre fiction was so poorly regarded that the single shop in his home town that sold sci-fi and fantasy books would only do so under the counter. Despite a strong interest in science, his aptitude lay in the written word and he became a journalist, working for the Bucks Free Press. During his time as a reporter he met local publishers, and they encouraged him to write his first novel. 1971's *The Carpet People* mixed *The Borrowers* with *Lord of the Rings*. It gained some measure of critical acclaim but didn't sell that well. Pratchett would rewrite it twenty one years later, claiming that the book had two authors, both of whom happened to be the same person. During this time, he went on to write two science fiction books; *The Dark Side of the Sun* and *Strata*, both spoofs of the works of Larry Niven and Isaac Asimov. These two books showcased his sharp wit and clever observation, but it would be

1983's *The Colour of Magic* that would set Sir Pratchett on the path to becoming one of the world's greatest fantasy authors.

The Colour of Magic is a collection of slapstick novellas strung together by the haphazard adventures of the failed wizard Rincewind and the luckiest tourist in literature, Twoflower. The book also introduced us to the Discworld, a flat world that rests of the backs of four great elephants. The pachyderms themselves rest on the back of A'Tuin, a huge turtle that swims through space. The gender of the turtle is unknown, though it hasn't stopped the odd civilisation or two from trying to get a quick look. If the set-up for this world sounds like a wry mix of esoteric philosophy, fantasy parody and sly references to everyone from Bertrand Russell to Galileo, that's because it is. Pratchett filled his mind with everything he could find and to say that he was widely read would be like saying that the Amazon is a bit long.

The success of the first three Discworld novels allowed Terry to quit his day job; he had moved on from journalism to become a press officer for the Central Electricity Generating Board round about the time people were asking enthusiastic and extremely concerned questions about nuclear power, so his departure from the role was remarkably well timed. The change in career would allow him to create one of his most well regarded novels: *Mort*. Though the character of Death is present in all of the Discworld books, it was the first time we really got to know him. Pratchett humanised the personification of Death; whereas

other writers have used the Grim Reaper as a source of horror, Pratchett imagined an extraordinarily pragmatic being who understood the cosmos in a unique manner. With its wry wit and its habit of speaking in block capitals, he made the personification of our own mortality easier to laugh at.

A total of forty-one Discworld novels have been written. The last book, *The Shepherd's Crown*, will feature the young witch Tiffany Aching as its central character. The Discworld novels feature a huge array of characters. From the wise tyrant Lord Vetinari to the eternal coward that is Rincewind the Wizard, Pratchett populated his world with a huge range of ideas and people. He whisked us off to the hot dusty land of Ephebe in *Small Gods* to explore the nature of faith. He explored ethics in journalism in *The Truth*, the futility of war in both *Jingo* and *Monstrous Regiment* and even displayed his profound dislike of all things Elvish in *Lords and Ladies*. The Discworld encapsulated a vast wealth of life experience, with its tongue in its cheek and a smile on its face. It also inspired an industry of its own; there are a great many games, graphic novels, audio dramas, plays and props, all inspired by this one man's writing.

He also produced books outside the Discworld series. One of the most loved is 1990's *Good Omens*, written with another world class author, Neil Gaiman.

It dares to ask the



question "What if the Anti-Christ grew up in an idyllic English village?" and delivers some hilarious answers. It also features Pratchett's version of Death. Another well regarded collaboration is the *Long Earth* series, written with Stephen Baxter. It is powerful and clever sci-fi that deals with alternate worlds and how mankind will always seek to exploit new ideas and lands.

In 2009, Pratchett was appointed a Knight Bachelor, the most ancient sort of knighthood granted. He said at the time "You can't ask a fantasy writer not to want a knighthood. You know, for two pins I'd get myself a horse and a sword." True to his word, he dug up 81kg of iron ore and added some allegedly magical meteoric iron. With the assistance of renowned expert swordsmith Jake Keen, he made himself his own sword. He remarked later that it was a sad state of affairs that a knight of the realm couldn't carry a sword around in public. At roughly the same time, a coat of arms was commissioned. The motto is 'Noli Timere Messorem', which translates as 'Don't Fear the Reaper'.

Pratchett's diagnosis of the Posterior Cortical Atrophy form of Alzheimer's disease seemed particularly cruel. Though a horrible thing to happen to anyone, for a man famed for his wide and vast knowledge with an extensive passion for learning and exploring it felt somehow more tragic. He was only 59 years old at the time. Pratchett continued to fight. He relearned his skills, using voice controls rather than a keyboard, and campaigned to raise awareness and funds for treatment of the condition. In addition to meeting the then-Prime Minister Gordon Brown personally to ask for an increase in spending on research, he also worked with the BBC to produce the two-part documentary *Terry Pratchett: Living with Alzheimer's*. He also campaigned for the right to die with dignity. In 2010, TV personality Tony Robinson gave the televised BBC Richard Dimbleby Lecture called *Shaking Hands with Death*. The voice may have been Tony's, but the words were all from Terry; he was just too ill to deliver the speech himself. In 2011, the BBC aired a one-off documentary on the subject of assisted suicide, called *Terry*

'Imagination, not intelligence, made us human.' - Sir Terry Pratchett.

Pratchett: Choosing to Die. It won a BAFTA in the same year.

Pratchett's kindness and generosity of spirit was well known. It is a testament to his spirit and nature that we have so many stories about him. He toured the world signing his books, and met many of his fans. Many have their own unique story about the man, and they all have one thing in common; they speak of his intelligence, of his kindness and of his love for mankind. It is perhaps telling that he created a character known only as The Librarian, a guardian of books who had been transformed into an orangutan. Terry always sought to seek out more knowledge and understand the nature of man better. He once remarked, "*I'd rather be a rising ape than a falling angel.*"

His white beard, floppy black fedora and long coat marked him out as a genial urban cowboy, or perhaps a post-modern sorcerer. Terry was a regular on the convention scene, both in the UK and everywhere else. Not only was he a common sight at events such as Worldcon (and indeed, won multiple Hugo Awards for his work), he was also a skilled public speaker, his peculiar sense of humour lending itself to a stand-up comedy routine of sorts. He was also the permanent guest of honour at The International Discworld Convention, also known as DWCon, a biennial science fiction convention based in the UK. The most recent event, held just last year, was the first convention which he could not attend. Instead, his famous black hat was placed in his chair. Terry still managed to give a speech though, thanks to a video link.

Pratchett died of natural causes at his home on March 12th, surrounded by family and with his beloved cat curled up on his bed. His assistant Rob Wilkins published a pre-prepared statement on the official Terry Pratchett Twitter account:

AT LAST, SIR TERRY, WE MUST WALK TOGETHER.

Terry took Death's arm and followed him through the doors and on to the black desert under the endless night.

The End.

Goodbye and thank you, Sir Terry Pratchett. You will be sorely missed. ✨

SIR TERRY PRATCHETT 1948 - 2015



THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE
BEST (AND WORST)
OF THIS MONTH'S
MOVIE / TV NEWS

HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA 2



After the first film was such a hit – and surprisingly fun – the pressure's on for the second visit to the hotel, owned by Adam Sandler's Drac. It needs to do better than this rather lacklustre poster though! We can check in again on October 9th.

MALLRATS 2

Kevin Smith is going back to the well again, as he has announced plans for a sequel to his 1995 film **Mallrats**. Though not a particular commercial success on its release, the film has a special place in the heart of many Smith fans. At the time of going to press, many of the original cast have already signed on to appear. It's already been confirmed that Jason Lee is back as Brodie Bruce, as are Shannen Doherty (Rene Mosier), Jeremy London (T.S. Quint), Michael Rooker (Jared Svenning), Renee Humphrey (Tricia Jones), Joey Lauren Adams (Gwen), Ethan Suplee (William), and Sven-Ole Thorsen (La Fours). Stan Lee will be returning in some form, and then there will, of course, be an appearance from Jason Mewes and Smith himself as Jay and Silent Bob plus Walt Flannigan and Bryan Johnston will return as Steve-Dave and Fanboy. As yet, Ben Affleck and Claire Forlani have yet to be confirmed, but it's only a matter of time, and they may well be in the bag by the time you're reading this.

X-FILES

After breaking the news on our website some time ago, it was finally confirmed that both leads, David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson, will be returning to the small screen as Mulder and Scully in a resurrected version of Chris Carter's **The X-Files**.

Speaking to David Letterman on The Late Show, Duchovny revealed, "There's Gillian and I, we're original. Mitch Pileggi will come back, and the cigarette-smoking man – if that means anything to anyone – will be coming back". The other characters that the actor refers to are Pileggi's Director Walter Skinner and William B. Davis' Smoking Man, who was a dark presence often felt in the show, although their return is as yet unconfirmed, with the actor later saying he, "Spoke out of turn". Additionally, it's rumoured that Annabeth Gish and Robert Patrick are also returning as Monica Reyes and John Doggett, respectively. The show will be a six-part limited series for FOX, with the stories being, according to Duchovny, a mix of mythology and standalone episodes. There's been no announcement on when we can expect it as yet, though.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2

In fairness, whilst many of us were expecting last year's **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** to take a turd all over our childhoods before stamping on them, it turned out to not be quite as bad as it could've been. Sure, the film wasn't ideal, but certain parts were, dare we say it, enjoyable. With a sequel now on the way, how do you get fanboys to give you a chance? Why, a step in the right direction would surely be to cast a beloved modern genre star in a key role, right? Indeed, and as such it looks as if The Arrow himself, Stephen Amell, is on board for **TMNT2**.

Amell will join **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2** in the role of fan favourite Casey Jones, a part played by Elias Koteas in the original movie franchise, confirmed by the actor himself who took to his social media sites, "What a fantastic day. Honored to play Casey Jones in #TMNT2". Given the trepidation from long-standing genre fans about the first film and this upcoming sequel, the casting of the super-likable, super-accessible, all round awesome dude that is Stephen Amell is certain to calm the storm that resides within many.

The report goes on to say that Amell was amongst six or seven actors who tested for the role, with him supposedly getting the nod down to his chemistry with the returning Megan Fox. And y'know, he's Oliver freakin' Queen. **TMNT2** is set for a 2016 release. AP



"CASEY QUEEN"



MARVEL

The biggest Marvel movie news this month centres on the two-part **Avengers: Infinity War**, with Joss Whedon to be replaced on the MCU's largest franchise by Anthony and Joe Russo. The Russos, of course, helmed the brilliant **Captain America: The Winter Soldier** and have just started shooting on **Captain America: Civil War**. Whedon is expected to still be involved in some sort of consultancy role, although it's believed that he's had itchy feet for a while in regards to wanting to get involved in other non-Marvel properties. **Infinity War** will see the butting of heads of Thanos with Earth's Mightiest Heroes, with **Part 1** set for May 4th, 2018 and **Part 2** following on May 3rd, 2019. Now that 20th Century Fox is finally shooting **Deadpool**, fans of the Merc with a Mouth have been given some very welcome news. Yes, allaying any fears, it has now been confirmed that the Ryan Reynolds-starrer will indeed be R-rated, meaning the very adult-themed Wade Wilson will get to crack wise, drop expletives and gorily slice the bad guys to his heart's content. This last month also saw the first reveal of Reynolds in the full **Deadpool** suit, and then there's been some casting news for the film, with newcomer Brianna Hildebrand joining the film as Negasonic Teenage Warhead, a telepathic precog protégé of Emma Frost. There's also been some confirmation on what roles other cast members will be playing, with Morena Baccarin's role confirmed as Copycat and T.J. Miller confirmed as Weasel. Then there's Gina Carano as Angel Dust and an unknown role for Ed Skrein. To be directed by Tim Miller, **Deadpool** is released on February 12th, 2016 release.

On other Fox Marvel properties, some new **X-Men: Apocalypse** production art has seemingly confirmed that Warren Worthington III, aka Angel, aka Archangel, will be a part of the film. The Archangel character is often a key part of any **Apocalypse**-based tales and the recent casting of Ben Hardy in an unknown "significant" role had many speculating that the former **EastEnders** actor was to play Worthington. Also joining the film is unknown Lana Condor as a long-time **X-Men** member, the energy-manipulating Jubilee. Elsewhere, Jennifer Lawrence, the series' current incarnation of Mystique, has confirmed that she won't be returning to the franchise after this next effort. Bryan Singer's **X-Men: Apocalypse** is currently set for a May 27th, 2016 release.

With Marvel's first Netflix-exclusive show having now debuted in the form of the Charlie Cox-starring **Daredevil**, one of the other Netflix shows has found itself a showrunner. **Notorious**' Cheo Hodari Coker will be overseeing **Luke Cage** and also penning the first two episodes of the series. Powerman himself will debut in **A.K.A. Jessica Jones** before his own ten-part series hits in the first half of next year. Mike Colter has been long-confirmed to be playing **Calvin**. ^{AP}

STAR TREK

In the run up to **Star Trek**'s 50th anniversary, there's a mad scramble to get a third film in the rebooted-not-a-reboot trilogy in cinemas, and with the passing of Leonard Nimoy, it seems even more pressing to deliver the goods. However, rumours are that a new **Star Trek** series might just be in the works. Apparently, CBS is indeed currently working to bring the series back to TV, with hopes to bring in Bryan Singer as an executive producer through his production company Bad Hat Harry. CBS is allegedly looking to bring on the members of the team of the defunct **Star Trek: Federation**, a 2006 project which went nowhere because of J.J. Abrams' film.

Director Christopher McQuarrie (**Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation**), writer Geoffrey Thorne (**The Librarians**), and producer Robert Meyer Burnett were all involved in **Federation**, which would have been set in a future well ahead of **Deep Space Nine** and **Voyager**. A smart move, as it'd allow a pretty fresh start rather than desperately trying to rehash past glories. It's also believed that Burnett's own fan film, **Star Trek: Axanar**, could be used as the initial guideline in order to budget a new **Trek** series.

However, Burnett has shot down any notion that he was involved in any plans to bring the franchise back to TV. Burnett claimed, "All of the **Federation** information is true... but we did that TEN YEARS AGO. The treatment was written but effectively killed when J.J. took over. It never went further than the treatment... and no one ever pitched it... and I don't know if Geoffrey wrote a full script. While I have been working on **Axanar**, and we are building sets, etc... I know NOTHING about a new CBS **Trek** series. As for currently working on something with Skydance? NO COMMENT! (But if I WERE, it is NOT related to **Trek** in any way)." Oh well... we can but hope. ^{DC}

STAR WARS

Since finding out the title of Gareth (**Godzilla**) Edwards' standalone film in the saga, **Rogue One**, official news has been thin on the ground. We did have confirmation that Felicity (**The Amazing Spider-Man 2**) Jones will be the main character, and the previously rumoured Aaron Paul isn't necessarily out of the picture, but certainly not locked. Other whispers point to the film involving an agricultural planet. This may well be Chandrila, the Agriworld that was once home to the New Republic and the Rebel leaders. Murmurs also indicate the Death Star will play a key role too, and those keen on keeping the established canon will be glad to know the Geonosians will still be the ones to build the Empire's lethal planet destroyer.

Written by Chris (Cinderella) Weitz, **Rogue One** will begin shooting in London this summer with a release date set for December 16th, 2016. As for **Episode VIII**, we already know it will be written and directed by Rian (Looper) Johnson, but we now also have a date for the diary. This next instalment will hit screens forty years and one day after the release of the very first film – May 26th, 2017.

ADEWALE AKINNUOYE-AGBAJE



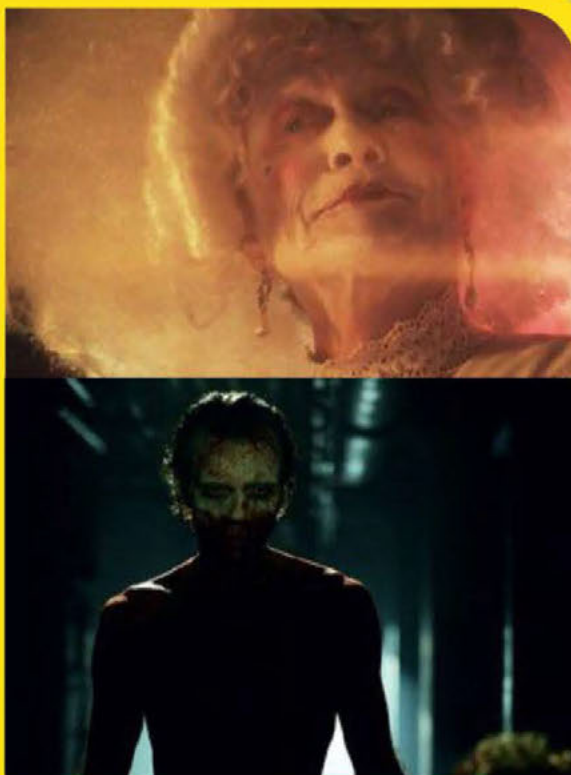
DC

Remember when we were all raising eyebrows at how many characters were being thrown in to **Batman Vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice**? Remember when those same brows piqued at the packed roster of **Suicide Squad**? Well David Ayer's villain-centric **Suicide Squad** has gone and added even more players into the mix. **Lost** and **Thor: The Dark World**'s Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje will be playing Killer Croc, whilst Raymond Olubowale and Scott Eastwood have been handed unknown roles. It's believed that Canadian boxer Olubowale, best known to genre fans for playing Axeman in the **Resident Evil** franchise, will have a minor role as a heavy for Amanda Waller and that he'll also be doing motion capture work for the hulking, vicious King Shark. As for Scott Eastwood, son of that Clint fella and who also worked with Ayer in **Fury**, it's believed that he will make a cameo appearance as Wonder Woman's love interest Steve Trevor ahead of a more significant role in **Wonder Woman** and possibly the **Justice League** movies. These new characters join a roster that already features The Joker, Harley Quinn, Deadshot, Boomerang, Rick Flag, Enchantress, Amanda Waller, Lex Luthor, Hugo Strange, seemingly Antiphon and Onslaught as the 'big bad' and possibly even the briefest of appearances from a certain Dark Knight. **Suicide Squad** is set for an August 5th, 2016 release.

Over to small screen DC action, the **Arrow/Flash** spin-off show is starting to gain some momentum. This last month has seen Ciara Renee added as Kendra Saunders, aka Hawkgirl, and **Doctor Who**'s Arthur Darvill as fan favourite Rip Hunter. Additionally, Dominic Purcell's Mick Rory/Heat Wave has also been confirmed to be a part of the show, joining Brandon Routh's Ray Palmer/The Atom, Victor Garber as Martin Stein/one half of Firestorm, Wentworth Miller as Leonard Snart/Captain Cold, and Caity Lotz's presumed-dead Sara Lance/Canary. The currently untitled show is expected to debut early 2016.

As for **The Flash** itself, it appears that Season Two of the Scarlet Speedster could feature other speedsters as executive producer Greg Berlanti has talked of their hope to bring others into the fold next season. No names were dropped, but already fans have been speculating on Bart Allen or Wally West making an appearance. Moving over to **Gotham**, the second season of that show has been confirmed to feature Clayface, Mad Hatter and Mr Freeze, with producer John Stephens adding that the Court of Owls is also being contemplated. And there was us thinking that Season One had a huge overkill of characters...

In some final DC-based news, and likely the best DC news of the month, Adam West and Burt Ward are returning as the Caped Crusader and Boy Wonder, Batman and Robin. The dynamic duo of West and Ward will be heading up an animated movie that will be released next year to tie-in with the classic 1960s **Batman** TV show's 50th anniversary. Ward confirmed that there will definitely be one animated movie, but then added that there could possibly be two. No plot details have been revealed as of yet, although we're already hugely looking forward to the prospect of animated adventures with West and Ward. AP



Now filming has been completed on Rob Zombie's **31**, we have our first look at the wonderful Judy Geeson as 'Sister Dragon', who runs Murder World alongside 'Father Murder' (the equally amazing Malcolm McDowell) and Richard (Halloween II) Brake's horrific-looking 'Doom-Head'. The film is expected to be released next year.

AND FINALLY...

Paramount are looking to expand the **Transformers** franchise even further, with more sequels and spin-offs now planned. Akiva Goldsman has been hired to work alongside director Michael Bay, producer Lorenzo di Bonaventura and executive producer Steven Spielberg to develop ideas for future films. Yay!

+++

George R.R. Martin is said to be developing a new sci-fi series for HBO. Currently titled **Captain Cosmos**, the **Game of Thrones** creator revealed the pitch was "At the dawn of the age of TV in 1949, a visionary young writer creates a science fiction series that tells stories no one else will dare to tell." The show's pilot will be written by **Z Nation**'s Michael Cassutt. Martin has reassured fans it will not interfere with the completion of the next much-anticipated **A Song of Ice and Fire** novel.

+++

David Lynch confirmed he's left the planned **Twin Peaks** revival, citing the lack of budget allocated by the Showtime network. Within hours, Showtime made a statement that they hoped they could work things out so that the series will still go ahead. Co-creator Mark Frost is still attached (so far), but without the creative input of Lynch, one has to wonder whether it will be worth it, so keep everything crossed that the network can raid the piggy banks and make it happen.

+++

As well as helming the upcoming Jason Statham/Melissa McCarthy vehicle **Spy** (due June 5th), and the all-female **Ghostbusters** flick, Paul Feig has apparently been approached to direct a film based on sweet-smelling (and non-toxic) kids' modelling clay Play-Doh. We have no more words...

TTC 412 WAS WRITTEN BY ANDREW POLLARD, MARTIN UNSWORTH AND DOMINIC CUTHBERT. EDITED BY MARTIN UNSWORTH.

WWW.

ALL THE HEROES

.CO.UK

THE COOLEST SUPERHERO
APPAREL IN ANY UNIVERSE



/alltheheroes



/alltheheroes

FASTER. FURIOUSER. MADDER.

by Iain Robertson

THE ROAD WARRIOR IS BACK! IT'S BEEN 30 YEARS SINCE DIRECTOR GEORGE MILLER TOOK US BEYOND THE THUNDERDOME. NOW HE'S BACK, WITH A NEW STAR IN TOM HARDY, AND MAX'S BIGGEST ADVENTURE TO DATE. COME WITH US AS WE TAKE A DRIVE DOWN FURY ROAD...

They may not think it sometimes, but fans of George R.R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* should consider themselves lucky. Not only do they have the biggest TV show in the world to tide them over between books, but they only have to wait a measly five or six years between instalments. Other genre fans have to be considerably more patient. When *Star Wars* returns later this year, it will have been a decade since the last film, 6 years fewer than the gap between the first two trilogies. Indiana Jones left 19 years between his ride into the sunset at the end of *Last Crusade* and emerging from a nuclear blast-proof fridge. George A. Romero went further still, keeping fans waiting 20 years between the third and fourth *Living Dead* movies.

All of those pale in comparison however to the latest icon to return from cinematic limbo. It was 1985, the year of *Back to the Future*, *The Goonies*, and *The Breakfast Club*, that Max Rockatansky became the one man to leave the Thunderdome. Now, surprisingly, we're back in Max's world, for a stripped down, blistering return to form, with a new star in Tom Hardy, and not a Tina Turner anthem anywhere to be seen.

For thirty long years it looked like the franchise was dead and buried. Star Mel Gibson and writer/director George Miller had both moved onto successful Hollywood careers, leaving their Aussie petrol-head days behind them. Prior to his well-publicised troubles, Gibson rose to become one of Hollywood's biggest stars, mainly thanks to the *Lethal Weapon* series. Once he segued into directing, his career peaked with a Best Director Oscar for *Braveheart*. Miller's career was less high profile, but he churned out a steady stream of hits, lending his producing and directing talents to the likes of *Dead Calm*, *Lorenzo's Oil*, *The Witches of Eastwick*, *Babe*, and the two *Happy Feet* films.

But, despite his career veering towards more family-friendly output, Miller's mind never left the world of *Mad Max*. He'd been thinking up ideas for a fourth instalment in the series since shortly after 1985's *Beyond Thunderdome*. A new film even got as





far as pre-production in early 2003. Unfortunately, real-world events overtook the film. 9/11 and the subsequent wars in the Middle East meant it was not to be. The costs of filming a Hollywood movie in Australia at a time when the American dollar was under pressure became prohibitive. And rocketing oil prices meant that a vision of the future where petrol is the world's most valuable commodity suddenly became less appealing to audiences seeking an escape from reality. The project was shelved, and Max was back on hiatus.

Over the next few years, there were constant rumours from both Miller and Gibson about the project's future. Then, following Gibson's DUI arrest and subsequent troubles in 2006, the star's career collapsed, and so, it seemed, did any plans for *Mad Max*'s future.

Miller, however, had other plans. After considering numerous ideas, he settled on a script co-written with British comic creator Brendan McCarthy, and began to actively turn the project, now named *Fury Road*, into a reality. McCarthy's a writer who, having written extensively for Judge Dredd, knows a thing or two about bleak futures, and the artist also designed numerous vehicles and characters for Max's return.

The project went through a number of further incarnations before landing in its final form. At one point Miller, following his experience making animated films, was considering reviving Max as both a 3D anime and a videogame. There were rumours of two live action films being shot simultaneously. Eventually a single, live action, 3D film was finally greenlit in 2009. Locations were scouted in the series' homeland of Australia, and a 2011 shoot was announced.

That wasn't the end of the tortured development though. An unexpected spell of heavy rain meant the suddenly lush Australian desert location didn't have the barren look Miller needed for his film. For the first time in the series' history, *Mad Max* decamped from Australia and the production moved to Namibia.

Australia wasn't the only one of the series' icons not to return. By the time shooting commenced in 2012, Gibson was also out. Following his troubles, the actor was no longer in a position to headline a major film. And, in his late 50s, Gibson was too old to portray the 30-something Max that Miller had in mind.

Names such as Jeremy Renner and Sam Worthington were bandied about, before Gibson's replacement, Tom Hardy, was confirmed in the role. Barely 18 months old when the original *Mad Max* was released, the former Bane is the perfect replacement for Gibson. Besides being one of the most watchable, electrifying actors of his generation – not to mention sharing Gibson's considerable screen presence – if you had to put money on one man to thrive in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, Hardy would be a safe bet.

Over the last few years, Hardy has risen to become one of the biggest stars in Hollywood. Following small parts in *Black Hawk Down* and Spielberg's TV series *Band of Brothers*, he had what should have been his breakthrough performance as the villain in 2002's *Star Trek: Nemesis*. Unfortunately, the film was not the commercial or critical hit it should have been (although, somewhat prophetically, it's the only *Star Trek* adventure ever to feature a desert-set car chase) and Hardy





instead spent the next few years building up an acclaimed stage and television career. It wasn't until 2008, when Hardy was cast as the lead in Nicolas Winding Refn's *Bronson* that Hollywood sat up and took notice. The likes of *Inception*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* and *Warrior* soon followed, but it was his performance as Bane in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight Rises* that turned Hardy into a superstar.

If Hardy's presence wasn't proof enough that the return of *Mad Max* is a big deal, his co-star should convince any doubters. Whereas the biggest star aside from Gibson to grace the original trilogy was Tina Turner, Hardy has a more credible co-star in the shape of Charlize Theron. An Oscar winner for *Monster*, Theron's character, Imperator Furiosa, is a world away from her last genre outing in Ridley Scott's *Prometheus*. Shaven-headed and sporting a nifty looking prosthetic arm, Furiosa is set to be more than a match for Max.

Other series newcomers on board include Nicholas Hoult (*X-Men's* Beast), supermodel Rosie Huntington-Whiteley (*Transformers: Dark of the Moon*) and Hoult's fellow *X-Men: First Class* alumna Zoë Kravitz. Whilst early rumours of a Mel Gibson cameo are unfortunately unfounded, one returning star of the previous movies is the original's villain, Hugh Keays-Byrne. After memorably playing Toecutter first time round, here he's again playing Max's main antagonist, Immortan Joe. It's a trick Miller's pulled before, using the great Bruce Spence in different, yet similar, parts in *The Road Warrior* and *Beyond Thunderdome*.

There's a curious correlation between the plot of a *Mad Max* film and its quality – the less there is, the better the film. The most densely plotted of the original trilogy, *Beyond Thunderdome*, is also the weakest in the series. *The Road Warrior*, which has a plot you could write on the back of a particularly small stamp, by far the best. Its bare bones plot is merely an excuse around which to feature some of the most spectacular car chases ever seen on screen. *Fury Road* is set to follow in *Road Warrior's* minimalist structure. Miller has described the film as an almost non-stop chase, with Max reluctantly teaming up with Furiosa and Hoult's Nux to safely escort a group of women (led by Huntington-Whiteley) known as the 'Five Wives' across a desert. The only problem – they belong to the warlord Immortan Joe, and he'd like them back. This leads to what Miller describes as a "high-octane Road War" which takes up the majority of the movie. In a further comparison to *The Road Warrior*, Max will remain largely silent. Miller estimates that Hardy may have as little as 20 lines of dialogue in the movie, a similar number to that spoken by Gibson in Max's sophomore adventure.

As is par for the course nowadays, Max's revival has seen speculation as to whether it's a sequel, remake or a reboot. In truth it's not that straightforward. Whilst there'd been speculation amongst fans that Hardy's Max would be a different character to Gibson's, Miller assures us that's not the case. He's still the same Max, although the director has updated his world for a modern audience. Miller describes it as a "revisit" to the series. It's still recognisably Max's world, but more epic – the Namibian desert is even more spectacular than its Australian counterpart, the vehicles are more impressive, there are bigger, better female parts and, crucially, a lack of '80s-style shoulder pads. Part sequel, part reboot, *Fury Road* simultaneously lets fans pick up where *Beyond Thunderdome* left off, and provides a jumping-on point for newcomers to the series.

It's in keeping with the fluid nature of the series that *Fury Road* doesn't sit into an easy category. "The (first) three films exist in no real clear chronology,

because they were always conceived as different films" Miller recently told an audience at SXSW. "The way we all thought about it, is next Wednesday, all the bad stuff we see in the news comes to pass, where we have economic collapse and oil wars, water wars and stuff we didn't even see it coming and we jump 45 years into the future and in a sense we go back to a dark age without rule of law." Whilst the world noticeably breaks down between the first and later films – with parts 2-4 seemingly taking place much later, Max never ages. He's a constant, mythological figure. The Road Warrior.

In a world where blockbusters are CGI-heavy and routinely aimed at a young audience, *Fury Road* has remained true to the series' roots. Whilst the likes of fellow '80s classics *The Terminator* and *Robocop* have had their hard edge stripped away in order to seek the all-important PG-13 rating in the States, *Mad Max* has remained firmly, and refreshingly, in R-rated territory. CGI has also been largely jettisoned, with practical locations and vehicles (including Furiosa's impressive truck, the War Rig) used whenever possible. With the exception of a spectacular-looking sandstorm, which would be impossible to do practically, CGI has been mainly confined to the likes of wire removal for the stunt team.

If anyone had any doubts about Max's return, they were blown out of the water at Comic-Con. Perhaps it had been too long, or it was Miller's career path veering towards children's films, but *Fury Road* was very much under the radar. That soon changed though, with the trailer driving Hall H wild, its reaction second only to that received by *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. All of a sudden, *Mad Max* was a big deal again.

And, well, it should be. *Fury Road* looks set to be one of the best blockbusters of the year. From the perfect casting of Hardy, to being an increasingly rare adult-orientated blockbuster, the return of Max is ticking all the right boxes. The series' mix of dystopian sci-fi and high octane car chases is a perfect fit for a blockbuster world currently dominated by the likes of *The Hunger Games* and *Fast and Furious*. Should *Fury Road* prove a hit, Miller's already confirmed a sequel script is ready to go, as well as plans for a *Mad Max* novel. It's time to show the pretenders how this stuff should be done. Move over kids. Max is back. And he's madder than ever.

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD opens in UK cinemas on May 15th.



By John Townsend

In The Mouth Of Madness



In anticipation of the release of *MAD MAX: FURY ROAD*, we take a trip down the dusty highway of cinema history to revisit the original *ROAD WARRIOR* trilogy...

A legend often emerges from the darkest of sources.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the teenage George Miller lost several friends to horrific car accidents. Growing up in rural Queensland, he was surrounded by a deep-rooted, intensely passionate car culture that thrived amidst the barren landscapes and on the long, straight, seemingly never-ending roads. With no speed limits in place, fatalities were frighteningly commonplace. Some years later in 1972, the now 27-year-old Miller was working as a doctor in the emergency room of St. Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, Australia witnessing and treating many of the injuries that had claimed the lives of his friends. A keen amateur filmmaker, he had met the likeminded Byron Kennedy at a summer film school the previous year and the pair had produced a short film entitled *Violence in the Cinema, Part 1* which had screened at various festivals and won numerous awards. Several years later, the pair began working with young, first-time screenwriter James McCausland who was keen to find a voice for his observations on the 1973 oil crisis and how it might affect normal Australians. Together they began to develop an idea and in 1979 that idea became the beginnings of a legend.

The story of *Mad Max* had begun.

The basic premise was a simple one; a tale of revenge set against the backdrop of a collapsing society torn apart by a shortage of oil. In a near, dystopian future the roads and highways are monitored by the Main Force Patrol (MFP), a slightly ragtag group of law enforcement officers who exist at the very edge of a corrupt and toothless justice system. Ensuring a perpetrator is stopped by any means necessary has become their only rule. Establishing this beyond any doubt is the opening car chase. Everything you could possibly want to know about

the sensibilities of *Mad Max* and the intentions of the filmmakers is clear in these fraught, violence-fuelled ten minutes.

After murdering an officer, The Nightrider and his supportively screeching companion are fleeing as fast as possible in a stolen car. Pursued by two MFP interceptors they leave a trail of destruction behind them, including one of the hapless chasers following a close encounter with a road sign. Approaching a town, the speed of the pursuit doesn't let up, with fellow road users and passers-by at risk of death by both the escapee and the MFP vehicles. As the pendulum begins to swing in favour of the gurning Nightrider, Max finally enters the fray. Max Rockatansky (Mel Gibson) is the MFP's top driver, the best they have and, it would seem, their secret weapon. After a game of vehicular chicken, Max runs down The Nightrider who perishes in a ball of burning metal. We have met our hero.

There is a stark contrast to this petrol-fuelled hell that Max and his colleagues patrol. Away from all the carnage is Max's family home; an idyllic safe place with his wife and young son. The pull of this serenity is becoming too much and much to the chagrin of his colleagues, Max is considering his retirement. Only the promise of a new, supercharged pursuit vehicle seems to prevent him carrying out this intention for now. However, when close friend Goose (Steve Bisley) is left a smouldering mess by head bad guy Toecutter and his gang, Max's resolve is strengthened and he tells his boss he's out, only to be given a leave of absence to consider his options. Packing his family into the car, the Rockatanskys head out on the road, a trip to meet family and to spend some quality time together. Meanwhile, Toecutter is still looking to avenge the death of The Nightrider and an unlucky, somewhat fortuitous encounter puts Max's family on a collision course. With chilling callousness the gang run down Max's wife and young child, leaving them for dead in the middle of the highway. As his wife lies fighting for her life, Max vows to get even; he gets mad.

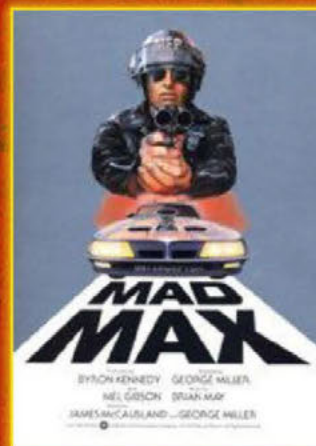
Setting off in his now iconic black V8 interceptor, Max pursues the gang, picking them off one by one until only the cowardly Johnny the Boy (Tim Burns) is left. Chaining him to a wrecked vehicle, and giving him a chance of escape if he saws through his own arm, Max leaves him to burn as revenge for his friend Goose and as gory closure to his vengeance.

If you ask people now what they remember about *Mad Max*, given that many may not have seen the film for some years, it will be that Max's family is killed by bikers and he sets out to avenge them. The interesting thing is that this is the final act of the film. The opening third is curiously disjointed, as if in the edit there was never a truly concise idea of how to set up the film and it is a good half hour before Max really has anything to do despite being introduced to the viewer in such a dramatic fashion. It is near the hour mark before the brutal act actually takes place upon which Max's life turns and then his retribution is quick and violent. Despite the opening car chase that sets the tone and feel for both this film - and the *Mad Max* series - the majority of Miller's story is taken up with the character development of Max and his family as a contrast to the wanton destructiveness and abuse caused by Toecutter's unhinged gang. *Mad Max* is a story of a man's reluctance to be irrevocably damaged by what he does and witnesses daily. Max longs for peace and sanctuary and only the most violent of crimes turn him into what he most fears.

Viewed now, the film itself doesn't quite live up to a reputation that has grown nostalgically in people's memories over time and through many cultural references. The realism of the crashes and injuries certainly does though, with the visceral and unflinchingly honest depiction of them drawn directly from the director's own experiences growing up and subsequently working in an emergency room. Interestingly, even Miller himself remains puzzled why the film was ever a success, admitting he



George Miller



sees only mistakes and his own limitations in *Mad Max*. But a success it was, in nearly every market except the United States which was more to do with a lack of distribution than any other factor. Max filled an audience's need for a new mythological hero, a character that when pushed knew no limits in his quest for justice. A new hero if you like, at a time when the world needed one. Over time, *Mad Max* has become an iconic film, and yet one that is flawed in many ways. With *Mad Max 2*, Miller set out to learn from his perceived mistakes and finish what he had started.

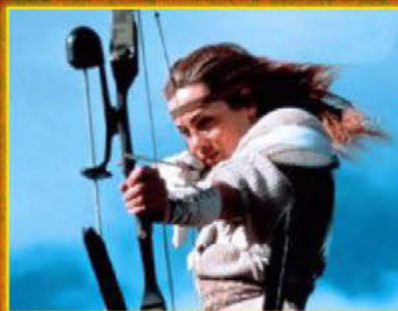
When embarking on the project that would eventually become *Mad Max*, Miller has admitted to extraordinary naivety, appreciating that at the time he never fully understood filmmaking and how hard it actually was. A budget of \$350,000, raised mainly by Miller and Kennedy themselves (working as on-call emergency doctors) didn't go very far when you had spectacular car chases and devastating crashes in mind (the finished film featured 20-25% less than the filmmakers had initially hoped to include). So stretched were the finances that each day after filming, it would fall on the two men to sweep up and ensure there was no evidence they had even been there; this was true guerrilla filmmaking. It was also a time when filming permits were unheard of and the local police joined a growing audience watching the day's events. With the sequel, things would change dramatically.

Despite the troubled release of *Mad Max* in the United States, Miller received several offers from Hollywood in the following months, with even a connection to the director's chair on *First Blood* rumoured. Despite this newfound popularity, Miller felt compelled to return to his created world to develop a sequel to *Mad Max*. With the greater budget he could now command he knew that he stood a better chance of fulfilling his initial vision, but something else was notably different. The experience of *Mad Max* had changed Miller's outlook entirely. Naivety was replaced by a "can do" attitude and with a more professional and similarly minded crew on board he set about producing what is the standout film in the series.

The first thing you notice about *Mad Max 2* is an aesthetic very different to its predecessor. Gone are the bleached, harshly stark visuals synonymous with the first film to be replaced by beautifully barren landscapes, an environment that is as harsh as it is breathtaking. Everything feels more refined and thought out, with the director's endeavour and ambition finally being matched by what he could physically do now backed by an estimated budget of \$2 million. Even with all the changes behind the camera and in the director's mind, the opening scenes play out like an echo of the first film.

A combative car chase results in a confrontation between Max and Vernon Wells' Wez, a mohican-sporting biker with a penchant for scary eyes, insane screaming and young blonde men. This scene serves to re-introduce Max (and introduce him to audiences yet to see the first film) and establish the central plot: oil is scarce and worth risking your life for. Even with *Mad Max* co-writer McCausland's inspiration coming from the 1973 oil crisis, it's a theme that was never focused on too closely in the first film. Now this is the central issue facing the desperate survivors in the wasteland and as much as food or water, is part of the daily challenge to survive. Global war has removed the need for law and order, and with it the MFP. This is a feudal, post-apocalyptic world that offers little comfort or hope.

After scavenging fuel and anything else he can from the prize of a Mack truck he faced off against Wez for, Max continues on his way accompanied by his sole companion; a rough, neckerchief-wearing dog whose diminutive size bears no resemblance to his protective aggression. Happening upon what appears to be an abandoned gyrocopter, Max takes its owner, The Captain (Bruce Spence), prisoner after exchanging a few customary niceties. Believing that he is bargaining for his life, The Captain reveals that he knows of a place where there is an abundance of oil, a colony containing a small refinery with



much more than they need but under siege from a gang of marauders headed by a merciless leader, The Humungus (Kjell Nilsson). After entering the colony, Max offers his assistance in helping the defenders escape, promising to return with the Mack cab from earlier so that the tanker they have can break out and the colonists can find a new place to settle away from the gangs. In return for his help Max wants as much fuel as he can carry and resists pleas to help the actual escape through driving the truck itself. However, when Max eventually does attempt to leave with his reward, he is attacked by some of The Humungus' men, his dog is killed and he is presumed dead when the fabled interceptor explodes.

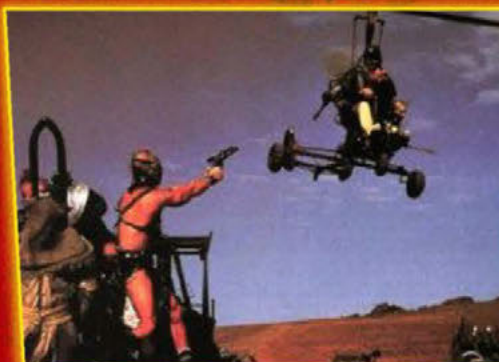
Rescued by The Captain, Max is brought back to the colony where, with little option left, he agrees to drive the truck. With a feral kid (Emil Minty) refusing to leave his side, Max bursts out and ploughs through the marauder's barricades, drawing their attention and allowing the other colonists to escape. After a lengthy pursuit, Max crashes and rolls the truck, and it's revealed the tanker actually contains just sand, exposing it as a decoy. As the feral kid is rescued, The Captain becomes leader of the tribe and Max remains to wander the wasteland, becoming a distant memory known only as the mythical "Road Warrior".

Mad Max 2 is much more simplistic in its central premise than its predecessor, being concerned predominantly with just the ownership of oil and the desperation this leads to, but encapsulated by a much more clearly defined narrative. *Mad Max* had tangible character arcs with deep rooted emotional motivations despite the slightly anarchic directing and editing style, but this second film with the increased budget, clearer sense of direction and more resolute motivation from Miller is stronger in its convictions. Miller has admitted that initially he thought of himself as a creative force purely driven by imagery and style, almost allowing narrative to develop unguided in the background. With *Mad Max 2*, that narrative is certainly more controlled, but is also much more to the fore. The spectacle and the stunts are still present but they have greater style, substance and scale. When directly comparing the two films, there are definite similarities in some of the action scenes and the impression that lingers is that Miller was setting the record straight; the faults and failures he still saw in *Mad Max* being put right somehow in the sequel. The final act itself even feels like a fitting ending to the films, with the tanker chase and battle having an epic quality that was missing in the first film's stripped down, guttural action set pieces. You definitely get the feeling that this was Miller signing off, leaving the audience with the best he could offer and providing a fitting finale to Max's journey.

One theme that does present itself in *Mad Max 2* is the emergence of pseudo-religious fanaticism. With the breakdown of society following a complete socio-economic collapse soon after the events of the first film, and the need for any kind of hope, however misguided, the marauders are led by The Humungus, a prophet-like figure who preaches from a four-wheeled pulpit while demanding brutal loyalty from his followers. While these marauders are futuristic, steampunk crazies, the defenders of the refinery are depicted as idealistic innocents; the majority dressed in variations of white and wholesome in their beliefs and support of each other. It's no accident that the man from the sky becomes their leader when their existing one is killed, and subsequently charged with leading them to pastures new and thus establishing a new colony. Perhaps of greater interest is the confirmation of Max as a mythological hero, a wasteland warrior descended cinematically from Sergio Leone's *Man With No Name* or many of Akira Kurosawa's characters.

If nothing else, *Mad Max 2* allowed Miller to exorcise the demons that had plagued him since the release of *Mad Max*. No longer needing to dwell on his perceived mistakes he left the wasteland behind to work on other projects. A famous and well-loved segment from *Twilight Zone: The Movie* (*Nightmare At 20,000ft*) showed a skill for darkly comic horror and he further demonstrated his adaptability with his involvement with Australian mini-series *The Dismissal*. Max refused to completely fade into the sunset though and despite the untimely death of his close creative partner Byron Kennedy, Miller began to develop a third film that would eventually become *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*.

Around 15 years have passed since the events of the previous film and Max is still wandering the wasteland, now with a caravan pulled by camels. After an attack by Jedediah (The Captain from the previous film) who may or may not be aware of his victim's identity, and as such being robbed of all his belongings, Max stumbles his way to Bartertown. This



is a seedy, Las Vegas-esque town complete with pigshit-powered neon and regular fights to the death. Initially turned away, but granted access after demonstrating his particular set of combative skills, Max finds himself in the presence of Auntie Entity (Tina Turner). As the ruthless founder and ruler of this isolated community, Auntie will do anything to retain her position and believes Max can help with a particular thorn in her side. Auntie is vying for control of Bartertown with her nemesis Master Blaster; a powerful team made up of a conniving dwarf and his huge masked bodyguard. In exchange for disposing of this problem Auntie will grant Max freedom and help in procuring his belongings. That said, her opening line to Max of him being "just a raggedy man" belies any confidence she might have, but is also one that has entered into genre folklore.

After discovering that Blaster is susceptible to shrill noises, Max challenges him knowing that a whistle he carries will work to his advantage. All disputes in Bartertown are settled in the Thunderdome, a huge caged arena replete with various weaponry with which to mutilate an opponent and the singular rule is simple: "two men enter, one man leaves". Disarming Blaster, Max refuses to take his life upon discovering he is mentally disabled, a huge man with a child-like brain. Breaking the one rule and angering Auntie by not adhering to the bargain, Max is sentenced to spin the wheel, a huge roulette-esque game of chance which will decide his punishment. Exile is his fate so, masked and bound to a horse, he is sent back out into the wasteland.

With his horse having died and nearing his own end, Max is discovered by Savannah (Helen Buday), one of a tribe of feral children left stranded in a small oasis when the plane carrying them crashed and all the grown-ups left. The surviving children believe Max to be a legendary Captain, returning to lead them home, fulfilling a prophecy passed down through stories or "tells". After convincing them otherwise, some of the children decide to leave anyway, desperately searching for the "Tomorrow-morrow Land".

Convinced by the children's leader Slake (Tom Jennings), feeling an inkling of responsibility and also the chance to gain revenge, Max follows the children to Bartertown where, after freeing the imprisoned Master, he leads them all to escape on an old train. Pursued by Auntie's men, including the psychopathic Ironbar (Angry Anderson), Max manages to create a distraction while the children are flown to safety by the reformed Jedediah. Abandoning himself at the mercy of Auntie, but finding her strangely respectful of his actions, Max is left to fend for himself once again. The children, now under the leadership of Savannah and making a home in a decrepit city, recall nightly the story of their journey and of their mysterious hero while Max continues to wander the wasteland alone.

The sheer scale of *Thunderdome* dwarfs the preceding films. With a budget of around \$12 million (this being the first of the series to have United States studio funding) Miller could allow his imagination the freedom that the financial restrictions on the other films couldn't. *Mad Max 2* was clear in its director's vision, and possibly the truest interpretation of the initial idea, but with *Thunderdome* he could set about expanding the world he had created. The size of the wasteland is explored beyond previous boundaries and with the desert having reclaimed much of the world and roads, which seem to have virtually disappeared altogether. The final scenes also have a desolate grandeur to them, the abandoned and ruined city hinted at throughout the series now shown for the first time, and further emphasising the chaotic new world that is rising from the ashes of the last. This ending echoes that of *Mad Max 2*, with a new colony to be established and the promise of a better life ahead.

The steampunk influence present in *Mad Max 2* is also further developed here with the vehicles much more akin to dune buggies than actual cars and the visuals more tribal in style than before. This is the true post-apocalyptic world in every sense. As for Max himself, he is more hermit than road warrior at the film's outset, sporting a full Braveheart head of hair and relying more on camel power than horsepower, but by the finale is much closer to his truer self.

Bartertown itself comes to life as a bustling, dangerously unpredictable place ruled like a dictatorship, and whoever controls the source of the power, in this case pigshit, controls the population. The political manoeuvrings of Auntie and Master are reminiscent of many thrillers of the time period, with each "leader" competing for popularity and strength, and with the winner being the one prepared to resort to any means necessary. There is no doubt this is a community of mistrust and fear and extreme measures have been introduced in an attempt to maintain some level of uneasy peace.

The real standout scene is the battle in the Thunderdome itself. A duel to the death while flying around the enclosed arena tethered to bungee ropes, this is both wonderfully creative and fearsomely engaging. The baying, hostile crowd jostle for the best view demanding bloody entertainment giving the impression that these encounters are perhaps the only highlight in the drudgery of day to day life in Bartertown.

If there is a flaw with *Thunderdome*, it's that there is an awful lot going on. With two main - and for the most part unconnected - plots running, not enough time exists to fully develop both. Max's development and personal motivations are given much less time than in the previous films and Bartertown as an environment is a place filled with narrative possibilities. The story surrounding the children plays out like a visit to a feral Neverland, with the band



of lost children at times becoming slightly irritating in their curious language and ways. This middle act revisits the religious imagery of *Mad Max 2*, with Max this time as a reluctant prophet and a leader forced into action, but it feels like part of an entirely different film. It's rumoured Miller had a post-apocalyptic *Lord of the Flies* meets *Peter Pan* idea in mind originally and that the continuation of the *Mad Max* story was a later addition. Credit must be given to Miller for incorporating different aspects of this world but Bartertown feels sadly under-explored, bookending the central children's story as it does.

Putting any misgivings aside, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* is a visual spectacle that received a favourable critical response although the greater budget and scale failed to inspire greater returns at the box office. Many remain unsure if this was the best or the worst of the three films, with the children's story being a particularly divisive element. On the whole though, *Thunderdome* received praise for its original and creative environments, for its inventive fight scenes, and for delivering a suitable finale to the series.

The legacy of the *Mad Max* series cannot be understated. Filmmakers from Steven Spielberg to James Cameron, Guillermo del Toro to James Wan have cited one or more of the films as having had a direct influence on their own work. This is certainly the case for Wan and Saw co-writer Leigh Whannell who directly reference the final scene in *Mad Max* when they set about creating their Jigsaw Killer's puzzles. Kevin Reynolds' *Waterworld* contains many of the same ingredients as Miller's films with Kevin Costner's Mariner emerging from the same DNA as Max. Max's reach is extensive.

This is without doubt the greatest achievement of George Miller and the late Byron Kennedy. The idea that began to germinate so long ago of a reluctant hero, an everyman pushed to his absolute limit, a mythical, mystical wanderer is so ingrained in modern pop culture as to be an icon comparable to any other film character of the past 40 years. As for Gibson, this is still a role that has defined his career. The recognisable simmering craziness, noticeable just below the surface, and the engaging, charismatic delivery so familiar in later films are first apparent in *Mad Max*. Rarely has an actor so embodied a role, the emergence of Max as a character perfectly contrasting Gibson's ascent to stardom in the wake of this trilogy.

Regardless of personal taste and preference, everyone... everyone has heard of *Mad Max* whether they have seen the films or not. His influence and cultural status is undeniable and he is a character that gains new fans and audiences in every generation. No matter how many times Max Rockatansky wanders off alone into the heat-hazed horizon, he just keeps on coming back. And he's always, always Mad.

Language Backliers



When *Mad Max* was picked up by American International Pictures (AIP) for distribution in the United States, it was viewed simply as a low budget, violent action film with no stars; not an easy proposition to sell to the American public. There was another more pressing problem, though; the Australian accents and colloquial language were considered too difficult and harsh for stateside audiences. Fearing a backlash due to incomprehensible Aussies the decision was made to overdub the original dialogue with a new audio track provided by an American crew (the only voices to avoid this indignity were those of Robina Chaffey, the singer in the Sugartown Cabaret scene, Goose singing in the car and the voice of Charlie heard through his mechanical voice box). Much of the slang and terminology was replaced ("Oi!" became "Hey!", "very toey" became "super-hot" – you get the idea) and the trailers for the film focused on the car chases and action sequences rather than on the star, the virtually unknown Mel Gibson, as would be the norm. With a limited release schedule and this apparent lack of confidence from the distributor it is no surprise that *Mad Max* was only a moderate success, certainly when compared to its popularity in the rest of the world. It would also be the last film AIP would distribute.

The worldwide success (and growing cult reputation) then presented new US distributor Warner Bros (who had been the worldwide distributor and took over after AIP's issues) with a problem. With the release of *Mad Max 2* on the horizon they knew it would be difficult to market a sequel to a film hardly anyone had seen. The solution; to rebrand *Max* as *The Road Warrior* in the US. With Gibson still not appearing on most cinemagoers' radars (Peter Weir's World War 1 drama *Gallipoli* was his only film of note), the marketing team still focused on the action rather than Max himself. The difference this time though was that the original dialogue was left in and the film was a huge hit, returning \$2.5 million on the opening weekend in the United States alone, and going on to gross over \$23 million.

Some things should just be left well alone clobber!

THE WARRIOR WOMAN RECALLS

Words: Martin Unsworth

Bursting onto the screen as the Amazonian, bow-wielding hard-ass in **MAD MAX 2 (THE ROAD WARRIOR)**, VIRGINIA HEY made an instant impact. Later to become known for her role of Zahn in **FARSCAPE**, here she remembers her time on George Miller's classic sequel...



STARBURST: *Mad Max 2* was your first acting role after being a model, how did you make that transition?

Virginia Hey: I was a fashion and beauty model in Sydney, Australia in the early '80s, I'd done about sixty or seventy commercials at this stage as I had a very commercial look. So I got to know a lot of the casting agents, and back in those days – I don't know what it's like now – the casting agents for commercials were the same for film and television. A lot of them were asking me 'do you want to audition for any film or TV work?' And I'd always say no because I was terrified of the acting process, and I hadn't done any classes; whatever I was doing in the TV commercials was just natural.

But they said I had some sort of natural ability, and they kept inviting me to audition. This one casting director from Mitch Consultancy said, "There's this film that you have to audition for – the role is perfect, it's almost made for you, she's such a strong character – a very attractive character but she's very strong, very silent. I just know you have the power in you to bring her to life, even though there's not a lot of dialogue". And I was really intrigued by what she was saying, although I didn't really understand it at that time, because I hadn't tackled a role before. She said, "Don't worry, it's a tomboy role" – and I was a bit of a tomboy! I thought it would be a bit of a challenge to accept the audition, so I said OK, but I could be dreadful!

So I audition with the director George Miller, and I was *really* dreadful, but he could see something. He said I really excelled in the improvisation, so he gave me the role. People think that you get to see the script, but you don't. You probably would if you're a big A-list actor, but in a support role, pretty much always you're given 'sides', which is just a couple of pages of scenes, that they'll see how you cope with. Then they had me in for fittings, and I had no idea what it was I was going to be wearing. Norma Moriceau was the wardrobe designer and she's quite a famous stylist and wardrobe mistress for film and TV in the UK – she was English – and it was

just after the punk era in the '70s so she had a bit of an edge to her, that included some interesting artistic challenging, rock-influenced and punk-influenced edges to it. The costume originally had lots of bare pieces, it was supposed to be bare midriff, and just the football top, with some kind of skimpy thing underneath. I was very young, and quite happy to wear that sort of skimpy thing for the movie.

It has a very isolated look, what were the conditions like on the set?

In actual fact, when we got out to set it was really freezing cold and it was raining, we were frozen! It was shot in Broken Hill, but it can get damn cold in the winter in various parts of Australia – it can snow! There was just one hotel, one pub and one convenience store; camels live around there and few people. Now it's quite different as it's become a tourist attraction, but back in those days it was very remote. Everywhere around you is the most beautiful red soil, but the trouble is when it rains, all of the little seeds in the soil start to sprout. So you can imagine, when you're shooting out of sequence suddenly the background is red, red, red, green, red, red, green – an absolute nightmare for them when they were editing. Because of the location we could have shot in sequence but we didn't.

I can remember the first time I saw the set. Picture this – I left Sydney on a propeller plane, which is terrifying as you're flying over the desert; you're flying straight then suddenly the plane will go all over, as there are so many thermals of heat that throw you around. So we land, and go in four-wheel drives to go across the desert to find what I thought was going to be the hotel. It's 1981 – we're all pretty cool, modern people – the next thing we know there's a dust storm which as you can imagine is quite a normal thing. We stop, the driver's on his walkie-talkie, but you can't see the road ahead of you. Next thing you see is this bare bottom backing out of the dust storm! We're slap-bang in the middle of nowhere and there's this man with a bare bum and leather chaps – now you've seen the movie, so you know who it is, but we hadn't seen anything, we didn't know what anyone looked like – so he's backing out and he's got a red Mohawk, and I'm thinking 'damn – Broken Hill's a *really* cool place!' Of course, it wasn't a dust storm, it was the outskirts of the set, and that was Wez (Vernon Wells) backing out of a shot. So that was my introduction to *Mad Max 2*, I'll never forget it as long as I live!

It looked quite a dangerous shoot, did you do your own stunts?

Yes, and stunts that I'm paying for now! When you're young, you do foolish things. The first thing George Miller said, while rubbing his hands together nervously, 'How do you feel about doing this stunt for us? What we need you to do is jump from this – quite tall – school bus down to the ground. And as you're jumping, (pretend) to behead one of the marauders. Jump down behind him with a knife.' I said of course, not a problem! You think you can do it, full of stupid bravado but no idea what the hell you're doing. I jumped down, but didn't know how to land; you're supposed to roll and stuff; I landed full on both feet, locked knees. The first time I did it, because I did that, I bounced. I landed upside down in the director's lap, because he was sitting on the floor and he wanted to shoot up to see the marauder and me jumping from the truck. He said, 'Are you alright?',





I laughed and said 'Yeah, let's do it again!' So I did it again a few times, and each time that happened and then I tried a different technique, but I absolutely bugged one of my knees. What happens when you have an injury when you're young, it doesn't really manifest to its full extent until you get older. So now my left knee is absolutely stuffed!

That sounds terrible, but to be honest, it looks fabulous on screen!

Yeah - so I did almost all of my own stunts except there was one that was a little bit too dangerous, which was when the truck was flying down the road in chase. It was really barreling down the road, really fast and I would have had to be walking across the top of the truck with no harness and nothing to hang on to. It was rocking, the truck was empty but in the film it's meant to have gasoline in it, but they didn't want to risk me falling off and killing myself, which my character did but not at that exact moment! What they did was have a stunt man - and I was sort of insulted and sort of quite thrilled that it was a man - who did all of the fast-paced truck-running scenes. They did a slower version with me on the top, moving very slowly and they were rocking it.

I had to do the hanging upside down shot - that's actually really hard - if you hang upside down for long periods of time you get swollen eyeballs, you get bruised around your eyes and your face swells up - it's really quite extraordinary! That was the most painful and uncomfortable part, which sounds pretty pathetic but you're upside down for quite a long while. I thought it was sort of funny when I was killed because Wez kills me, he fires something like five metal arrows with a hydraulic cannon. In reality, metal arrows fired out of a cannon would go through twenty people and come out of the other end! But Warrior Woman stops them dead!

Sounds like the health and safety guys would have a field day now!

Another thing that was dangerous was the compound bow - which was about a 40lb pull-back bow - it was very difficult to use, and I had to be trained to use it, and it was really fun training with targets. I learnt how to use it, aim it, cock it, everything and for most of the film I use it as it is, without even thinking twice about it - aiming it at people's heads as I was required to. None of us thought about it, not even the stunt people, nobody - that this is a loaded weapon aimed inches away from actors' heads. Not even a highly-trained military person would aim - especially for a film - a loaded, murderous weapon at someone's head! I didn't think about this until about twenty-five years later, someone at a convention laughed 'Oh, I hope that bow and arrow wasn't real' and I said oh no, it was real, and the arrow was real. 'So you were aiming a loaded weapon at Mel Gibson's head?' Oh my god, I was too! I didn't think of it, and neither did Mel. It was not in anyone's thoughts. So it's pretty scary to know that all I had to do was to let my hand slip for a second and I would have killed him, or anyone else I was pointing it at. Later on, in some parts of the film, just because my hand would get tired from pulling it back, they did give me a rubber string, but not for any safety reasons. So that was pretty dangerous.

VIRGINIA HEY is currently making appearances at several conventions over the summer. She also sells a line of handmade soaps and perfumes on Etsy under the name Whiteflowerlei. STARBURST would like to thank her for the use of the rare, behind-the-scenes photographs that accompany this feature.



By Andrew Pollard

MEL
GIBSON

MAD MEN

TOM
HARDY

For a moment in time, Mel Gibson was one of the biggest names on the planet. From humble beginnings to massively successful highs, this is a man who has had more peaks and valleys than most could ever fathom. Then just when you thought he was up, he was down, and just when you thought he was down, he was up. Love him or hate him, this proverbial Grand Old Duke of York is a vital part of genre history.

Despite many believing Mel to be Australian, he was actually born in Peekskill, New York on January 3rd, 1956 to Anne and Hutton Gibson, the sixth of eleven children (that is a literal football team!). As for his ancestry, his heritage spreads wide, taking in Irish, English, Welsh, Scottish, Australian and American roots. Mel Colm-Cille Gerard Gibson would spend his early years in the New York area before finally making the move to Australia in late 1968 at the age of 12. Mel's father had earlier received a \$145,000 settlement from the New York Central Railroad, not to mention a cheeky \$21,000 on TV's *Jeopardy!*, before deciding upon a move to Oz as a mark of protest against the Vietnam War. During his first few years down under, young Mel would be singled out and bullied at the Christian-heavy St. Leo's College. Maybe Mel's graphic depiction

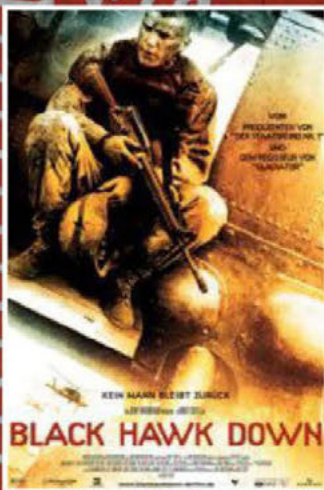


As the latest MAD MAX hits our screens, we look at the careers of the two men who would embody the ROAD WARRIOR character...

Much like Mel Gibson, Tom Hardy has had his fair share of ups and downs. Born in Hammersmith, London on September 15th, 1977 to artist Anne and writer Edward, Edward Thomas Hardy has gone on to become one of the premier acting talents of the last decade or so.

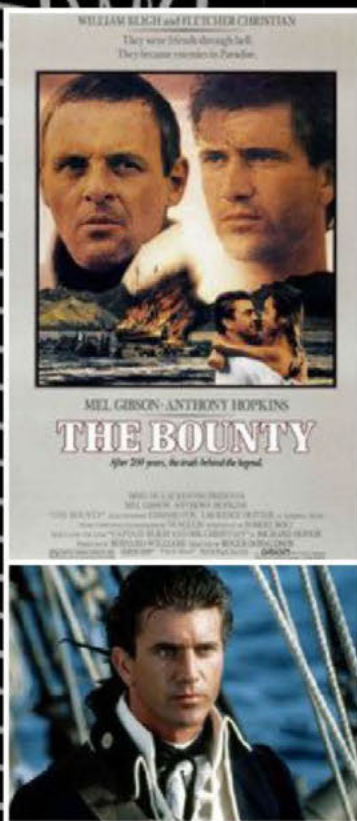
Given his parents' professions, it was always likely that Hardy would wind up involved in the arts in some form, and an early stay at Richmond Drama School paved the way for Tom to study at the same Drama Centre London that can list Colin Firth and Pierce Brosnan as former pupils. Despite Firth and Brosnan's background with the school, it was Gary Oldman who Hardy referred to as his "Absolute complete and utter hero" and "the greatest actor that's ever lived." In terms of icons, there's far worse ones to choose from. But much like Oldman has had some troubles over the years, so did young Tom Hardy.

Despite his obvious talent, Hardy had some serious drug problems during the early part of his career. So serious were the problems, it looked as if his career would end before it even got going. The actor was so impressive in his early days, he actually got pulled out of Drama Centre early after landing the



of the brutalisation of Jesus Christ years later can be traced back to his time with Christ-botherers here. Not to worry for young Mel, though, for his old man would switch him over to a more suitable high school in 1969 – one that seemed to embrace fighting, smoking and drinking. And that would be where the foundations of the young Mel Gibson's notorious early career madness would be laid.

Supposedly a bit of a joker in his younger days, young Mel was given a push on his way to stardom by his sister. Unbeknownst to him, she filled out an application for the National Institute of Dramatic Art in Sydney for him. Deciding to go along for an audition and see what the fuss was about, Gibson was accepted with no qualms in 1974. Maybe this surprise entry was explanation for his early time there, for he spent his time partying, boozing, womanising, and growing out his barnet and beard. Standard 1970s stuff, really. His focus really came when he landed the role of Romeo opposite Judy Davis in a stage production of *Romeo and Juliet*, and Gibson would finally graduate in 1977, landing his first TV and movie roles in the same year; on TV as a naval officer in *The Sullivans*, and a low-budget movie debut in *Summer City*. Mel would also spend some time the following



role of Private John Janovec in the much-acclaimed *Band of Brothers* mini-series. After this, he'd go on to make his feature film bow in Ridley Scott's 2001 *Black Hawk Down* before an underrated turn as *Star Trek: Nemesis'* villainous Picard clone Shinzon. In the background of all this, Hardy was battling demons in the form of alcoholism and the use of crack cocaine. He'd enter rehab and has since been clean and sober since 2003.

With his dependency behind him, the actor took to the stage in productions of *In Arabia We'd All Be Kings* and *Blood*, which would bring him the London Evening Standard's Most Promising Newcomer Award and a nomination in 2004's Laurence Olivier Awards. It's amazing what a difference quitting crack does for a career, right? Switching back to the big screen with the likes of *LD 50 Lethal Dose* and *Layer Cake*, Hardy would continue to keep his work varied, as highlighted by his turn in the 2005 BBC mini-series *The Virgin Queen*, in which he played a childhood friend of Elizabeth I, and BBC Four's retelling of *A for Andromeda*.

Small roles in big films (see: *Marie Antoinette*) would continue to be mixed with TV work like *Stuart: A Life Backwards* (for which he was nominated for a Best Actor BAFTA), *Cape Wrath*



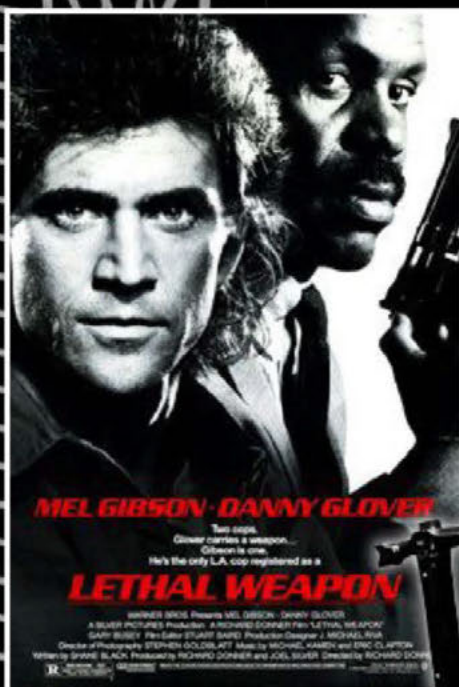
LAYER
CAKE

"I'm not a gangster, just a businessman. And my commodity happens to be cocaine."
- XXXXX

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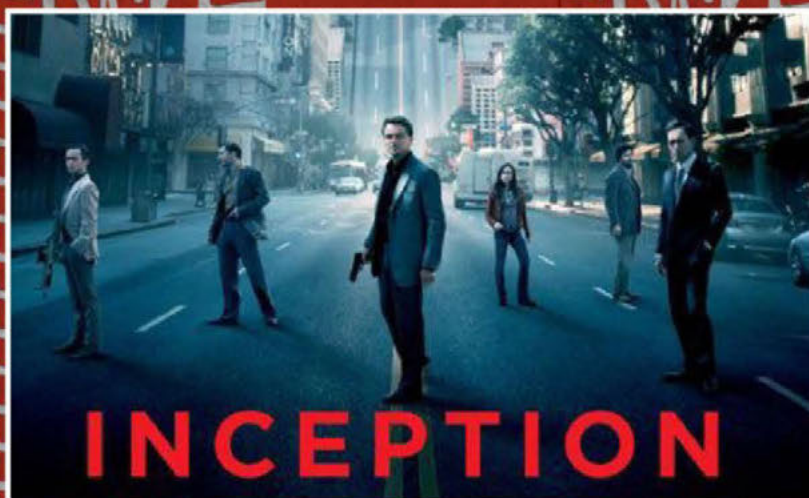
year touring with the South Australia Theater Company, and it was during this period that he met his future wife, Robyn Moore. But 1979 would be the real start of Mel's rise to stardom.

It was in '79 that a little film by the name of *Mad Max* was released. As legend has it, the ragtag Mel was actually involved in a heavy bar fight the night before his audition for the movie but still managed to eventually land the gig of Max Rockatansky. Upon turning up for the audition covered in severe cuts, bruises and swellings, Gibson was asked to return in three weeks for another audition for one of the 'freaks' of the film. Mel would return fresh faced and charm himself into the leather pants of the lead role. For his part in George Miller's dystopian outback effort, Gibson was paid the sum of \$15,000. And much like *Mad Max* would help give Australian cinema a shot in the arm, it also boosted Gibson's career no end. April 12th, 1979 was *Mad Max*'s Australian release date, and the film would be released in the US in March, 1980. Despite wowing US audiences, there was one massively notable change: the dialogue. For the American release, American accents were implemented and words like windscreen became windshield. The fear was that the heavy Australian accents of Mel and Co.



and *Oliver Twist* as he kept himself busy and continued to build a reputation for himself. Then 2008 would see Hardy on great form as Handsome Bob in Guy Ritchie's *RocknRolla*, and the following year would see the actor's star given a huge boost with a mesmerising turn as the titular character in 2009's *Bronson*. As criminal Charles Bronson, Hardy wowed fans and critics alike with his performance, his electric charisma, and also the stark discipline he'd brought to the role as he put on 3 stone of solid muscle to play one of Britain's most famous prisoners. In recognition of this, *Bronson* saw Hardy nab himself the British Independent Film Award for Best Actor. But again he'd mix his film credits with gigs on the small screen, this time with Sky 1's *The Take* and ITV's 2009 production of *Wuthering Heights* in which he played the famed Heathcliff who Kate Bush sung about (Hardy's future wife Charlotte Riley was the mini-series' Cathy). He'd follow this up by being directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman in an early 2010 Chicago stage production of *The Long Road*, again getting impressive reviews from most quarters.

As ever when somebody's star is on the rise as was the case with Hardy at this time, Hollywood comes knock-knock-knocking. Sure, he'd dabbled





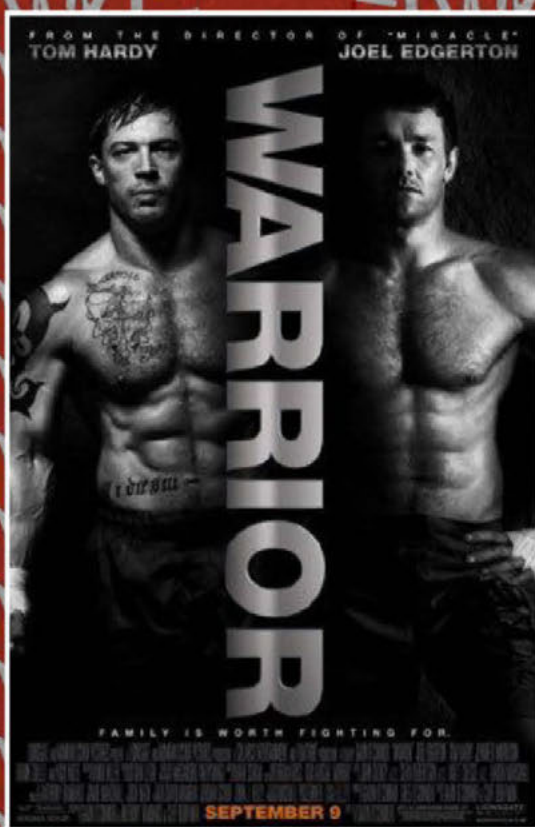
would leave US cinemagoers scratching their head. Whereas the film firmly split opinions with critics both in Australia and overseas, one thing was certain: Mel Gibson was on his way to being a major global star.

Following *Mad Max*, Gibson would go on to star in the hugely-acclaimed 1981 World War I movie *Gallipoli*. In fact, Mel won the Australian Film Institute's Best Actor Award for his turn as Frank Dunn, the same award he was also given for his starring role in *Mad Max*. But whereas *Mad Max* gave the actor a certain sort of popularity, it was *Gallipoli* which made audiences realise that maybe there was more to this Mel Gibson chap than they first thought. Peter Weir's film showed that Gibson was actually a rather good serious actor when he was given a script that allowed him to be. As such, this led to him getting himself a Hollywood agent in the form of Ed Limato.

1981 also saw Gibson's first bona fide US hit. That film? Why that'd be *Mad Max 2*. The first *Mad Max* had done well over in the US to an extent, but the sequel, released under the title *The Road Warrior* in the United States, drew impressive figures and impressive responses. Even more impressive, the Australian twang on Gibson was allowed to feature in the film this time!

By this point, Gibson's Hollywood star was starting to shine brightly, although 1982 saw the release of a film called *Attack Force Z*, a stinker of a World War II flick filmed years prior, that was only then getting a release. Even that wasn't enough to derail Mel's rise to stardom, though. Further critical acclaim would follow in '82's *The Year of Living Dangerously*, although after that Gibson would take a year-long break from acting due to the birth of his twin sons. His return would be alongside Anthony Hopkins in 1984's *The Bounty*, but the shoot itself proved a tad problematic at times. The reason for this was that Mel was up to his old tricks and getting involved in barroom brawls. So serious was one fight that the actual shooting order of *The Bounty*'s production had to be altered to fit in with the bruising and cuts to Mel's face. This would be followed up in 1984 with his official Hollywood debut as a struggling Tennessee farmer opposite Sissy Spacek in Mark Rydell's *The River*. Later that year would also see him star opposite another well-revered leading lady in the shape of Diane Keaton for *Mrs. Soffel*. But then it was time to return as Max.

With 1985's *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*, not only did Mel get to star alongside megastar Tina Turner, it was the film for which he got his first \$1



with that 'scene' by taking the lead villain in a huge movie like *Star Trek: Nemesis* years ago, but since then he'd managed to hold back from venturing into blockbuster territory once more. That changed when Hardy landed one of the key roles in Christopher Nolan's epic 2010 sci-fi thriller, *Inception*. Despite confusing and impressing in equal measures, *Inception* proved to be a huge box office hit and took home over \$825 million. Hardy's turn as Eames went on to win him that year's BAFTA Rising Star Award. It was also around this time that it was first revealed that Tom Hardy would be taking over the Max Rockatansky gig from Mel Gibson for a new *Mad Max* movie. Obviously, this *Mad Max* relaunch would go on to take its time to get firmly off the ground.

After the success of *Inception*, the growing stature of Hardy saw him brought in to replace Michael Fassbender on 2011's *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. Despite a whole host of hype and hope, that film itself ended up a little underwhelming to some, with it splitting the opinion of fans and critics alike.

Hardy would follow this up with *Warrior*, in which he would put in a badass performance as MMA fighter Tommy Riordan. Again this would bring the actor plenty of plaudits, and even the soppy *This Means War* went down reasonably well on the Hardy front. Then came a reteaming with Nolan as Tom claimed the role of uber-villain Bane for the final part of his Bat trilogy, *The Dark Knight Rises*. Hardy's Bane was unlike any version of the character that fans had seen, with him happily steering well clear of the mindless goon à la *Batman & Robin*, but also losing the accent and certain mannerisms of the famed comic book version of the

million salary. And he'd certainly enjoy this financial boost, for he'd then take a couple of years off and spent the bulk of his time at home with his cattle. Of course, another familiar role was just around the corner, and when he made his return to acting it was as Martin Riggs in 1987's hugely popular *Lethal Weapon*, further boosting his Hollywood 'leading man' credentials. Now on a roll, Mel would then go on to mix it up with some of the industry's biggest names, starring with Kurt Russell and Michelle Pfeiffer in 1988's *Tequila Sunrise*, a return as Riggs in 1989's *Lethal Weapon 2*, opposite Goldie Hawn in 1990's *Bird on a Wire*, and working with Robert Downey Jr. (we wonder what ever happened to him?) on 1990's *Air America*. He'd even go on to dabble with Shakespeare in 1990's *Hamlet*.

It was at this time, when his star was starting to shine at its most brightest, that Mel started to think outside of the acting box a little. In 1992, as well as another Riggs outing in *Lethal Weapon 3* and playing a really young old man in *Forever Young*, he'd begin doing some research work on a personal movie project that would eventually become *The Passion of the Christ*. 1993 would also see him make his directorial bow, helming (and starring in) *The Man Without a Face*. Like so many before him and since, Gibson

was starting to find a balance in his work, flitting between big commercial efforts and more private, personal films. He'd still be churning out relatively successful films (at least in Hollywood terms), though, with 1994 seeing him star opposite Jodie Foster in *Maverick*, and 1995 brought one of the most iconic moments of his career. That would be a tale by the name of *Braveheart*, which Gibson produced, directed and starred in. The film would be nominated for ten Academy Awards, winning five of them including Best Picture and the Best Director gong for Mel.

Following the hugely successful *Braveheart*, Gibson would lend his vocals to Disney's *Pocahontas* before working under Ron Howard for 1996's *Ransom*. On a personal level, 1997 would then see him be given Australia's greatest honour as he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia. The same year would also see him work alongside Julia Roberts and Patrick Stewart in *Conspiracy Theory*, before the cow was firmly milked dry with 1998's *Lethal Weapon 4*. Whilst this fourth *Lethal Weapon* underwhelmed and wasn't all that well received, it was starting to become clear that some of Gibson's career choices were maybe not all that great either. The acclaim and recognition had started to spread thin, and a lot of his projects just seemed to induce groans or seem as if they



were purely for a payday. 1999's *Payback* was another film that was just there, whilst the year 2000 brought *The Patriot*, vocal work on *Chicken Run*, and then the awful (yet surprisingly successful at the box office) *What Women Want* in which Mel can hear the inner thoughts of women. It was also at the turn of the millennium that Gibson's long-standing passion project redo of *Fahrenheit 451* was finally scrapped after Mel had spent years trying to put the remake together. Similarly, a 2001 plan for Gibson to direct Robert Downey Jr. in a stage production of *Hamlet* was canned after RDJ's well-publicised drug problem reared its head again.

Vietnam War effort *We Were Soldiers* followed to a mild reception in 2002, but it would be that year's *Signs* which would become the highest-grossing film that Gibson had ever been involved in on a purely acting basis. But it was around this time that Mel publicly stated that he was more or less done with being a movie star. He declared that it would take a truly special script for him to perform once more, and in fairness it was likely the best for him and for cineastes at that particular time. The coolness, aura and genuine star quality of Mel Gibson the actor seemed to have waned by that point, as it had with many of the stars who had made names for themselves in the 1980s.

It was around this time that Mel decided to focus the majority of his time seemingly upsetting any and everybody, particularly if there was some connection to religion. A 2003 interview would see Gibson proclaim how the Vatican II had, "Corrupted the institution of the church" and then he'd be in a spat with The New Yorker over claims they made about Mel's father. It didn't help when Gibson took verbal aim at the reporter making this claim, threatening him and his dog. Yeah, this was the time that 'crazy' Mel started to appear once more. But he had one brutal movie up his sleeve, as the Gibson-directed *The Passion of the Christ*, after having been in development for over a decade, arrived in cinemas in early 2004. Gibson himself put up \$25 million towards the film's production, and whether people loved it or hated it... they were all seeing it. As such, despite much critical and fan poo-pooing, *The Passion of the Christ* would become the highest grossing R-rated film of all time, bringing home over \$600 million. And while some hated the film, others saw it as something spectacular. Either way, Mel was certainly trying to do something different, with his aim being to: "Transcend language barriers with filmic storytelling."

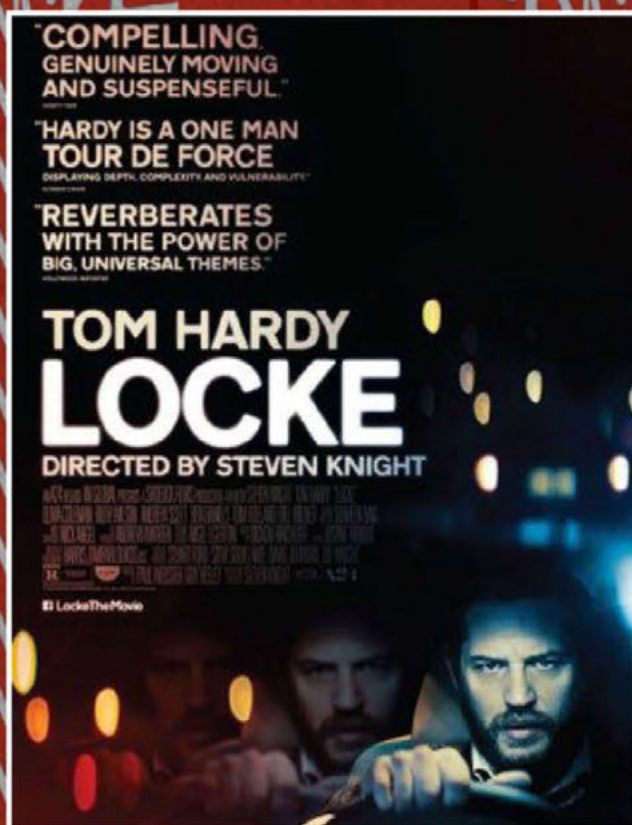
With the directing bug again in his system, Gibson would follow this up



rogue. Despite some initial concerns over the Bane voice, Hardy's performance was again fantastically received by the majority even if *The Dark Knight Rises* itself fell a little flat with some audiences.

Continuing on his roll, Tom Hardy again delivered as a Depression-era bootlegger in *Lawless* before another marvellous turn in the unique *Locke*, with that film being solely focussed on Hardy throughout its 85-minute running time. That 2013 film was followed last year by a spell in *Peaky Blinders* and also starring alongside James Gandolfini in *The Drop*, the last movie before Gandolfini's untimely passing. And now here we are, with Tom Hardy set to appear on screens in the relaunched *Mad Max*. Given his credentials, impressive performances, and the reputation that he has well and truly earned himself at this point, we're hoping for big things. From the footage seen so far, so much of what made the original *Mad Max* movies great has been incorporated here, and you have to feel that if Mel Gibson was ever to be replaced as Max Rockatansky then there's no more suitable fit than Tom Hardy right now.

The demand for Hardy is high, and so it should be. As well as *Mad Max* arriving in cinemas in May, Hardy has completed serial killer thriller *Child 44* and is in



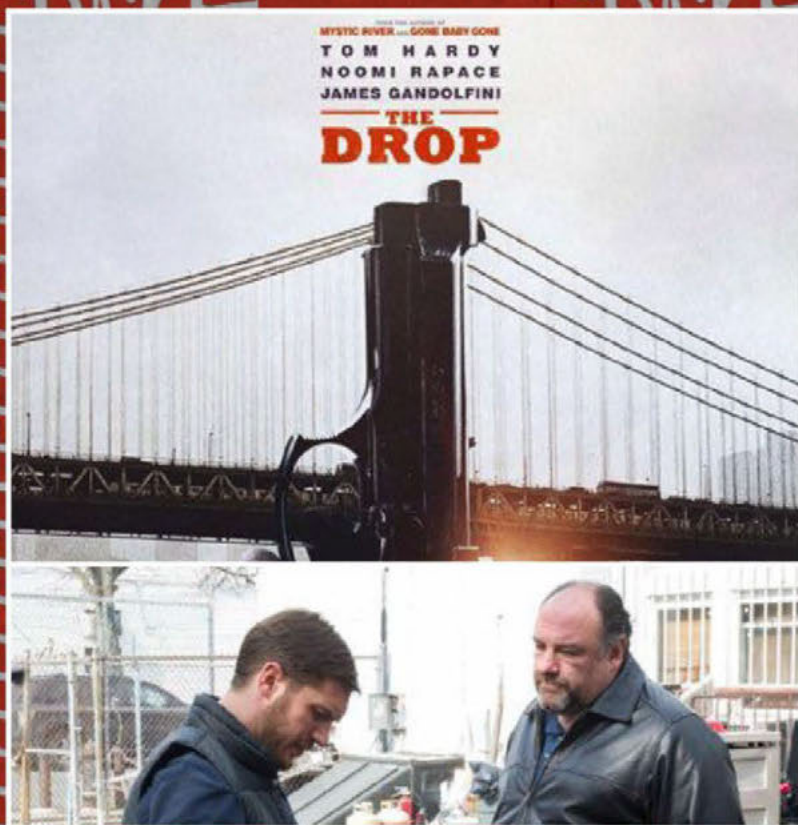


by helming a few episodes of ABC's *Complete Savage* series, but his next big screen effort came along with 2006's *Apocalypto*. Focussing on the Mayans and again scarce on dialogue, the film would do okay in terms of numbers, grossing around \$120 million, but was nowhere near the hit that *The Passion of the Christ* was. 2006 was also the time that his personal life took another hit, with he and wife Robyn divorcing in the aftermath of some of Mel's most notable misdemeanours. That was after Gibson had gotten himself into trouble with the law once more. The couple separated in 2006, divorce proceedings started in 2009, and the divorce finalised in 2011. As part of the settlement, Mel ended up shelling out a cool \$400 million to his ex-wife. Ouch. Gibson's reputation was also further damaged during his next relationship, with Russian pianist Oksana Grigorieva taking out a restraining order against him. This all only added to some of the darker elements of Gibson's reputation, with alcohol often proving a problem during his career. Despite his drinking problems, Mel has always been known as somebody who is punctual and professional when working on a production, with *Lethal Weapon 2* director Richard Donner amazed when he found out that his star was drinking five pints of beer for breakfast whilst shooting that

film. Then there was the various drink-driving issues over the years, including offensive comments to a female officer, and some well-publicised anti-Semitic remarks. You stay classy, Mel.

There are plenty of horror stories out there for you to look into should you so wish, but this piece here is designed to look at Gibson's career. And so with that, Mel's acting career started to make movements once more in 2010, starring in Martin Campbell's *Edge of Darkness*. He would then follow this up with fairly awful comedy *The Beaver* before delivering some brilliant, if not just a tad tongue-in-cheek, performances in *Machete Kills* and *The Expendables 3*, in both of which he played no-good bad guys. Since then, he's wrapped shooting on actioner *Blood Father* (expected to be released later this year) and is set to start production on *Hacksaw Ridge*, which will see him direct Andrew Garfield in a World War II movie.

There's been plenty of ups and plenty of downs in both the career and life of Mel Gibson, but one thing's for certain: when he got it right, he was absolutely fantastic. And with his three turns as Max Rockatansky, Mel Gibson forever engrained himself in the annals of genre cinema.



production for *Legend*, in which he'll play both Ronnie and Reggie Kray. Then he's also been signed up to a first look deal at Warner Bros, not to mention contracted to play the lead role in the movie adaptation of the Tom Clancy's *Splinter Cell* video game series, plus he'll be playing the legendary Elton John in the *Rocketman* biopic, and then there's David Yates' off/on *Cicero* trilogy for which Hardy has signed on to play Al Capone.

Safe to say, Tom Hardy is one busy guy. If all goes well with *Mad Max*, expect his schedule to only further grow when the inevitable *Mad Max 2* comes calling. Whereas *Mad Max* was Mel Gibson's career-maker, it's merely another walk through superstardom for Tom Hardy. Hardy has already arrived, and at 37 years of age is arguably not even in his prime yet. Sure, he's got a long way to go to reach the global megastar level that Gibson reached, but Hardy's a far better actor and you just hope that he keeps on reaching the high standards that he's now set himself. Plus he's not offended any religious groups yet. Always a winner.

Max Rockatansky's leather ensemble is in safe hands with Tom Hardy, so let's see what he can bring to the table of the desolate, apocalyptic chaos that is *Mad Max*.



BATTLETRUCK

LLOYD PHILLIPS AND ROB WHITEHOUSE present

A HARLEY DOOLITTLE FILM
BATTLETRUCK

Starring MICHAEL BECK JAMES WAINWRIGHT ANNIE MCENROE
JOHN RATZENBERGER RANDOLPH POWELL



Considering the car chase may conjure up scenes from *Ronin*, *The French Connection* or even your own run-in on the M1, but *Mad Max 2* remains the quintessential car caper. Cinema has had a long-standing fascination with vehicles and machinery, right back to 1896 with the Lumière brothers' *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*. There was Marlon Brando being a bad boy in *The Wild One*, Steve McQueen tearing San Fran a new one in *Bullitt* and David Carradine putting pedal to the metal in the dystopian *Death Race 2000*. But in the late sixties and throughout the next decade, exploitation cinema was full of biker B-movies that saturated the screen with the grubby sheen of garish flesh and torn leather, not to mention the carsploitation. Hey, if the tire fits... And then there was Max. 1979 brought the first in George Miller's trilogy and, for many filmmakers, *Mad Max* was year zero.

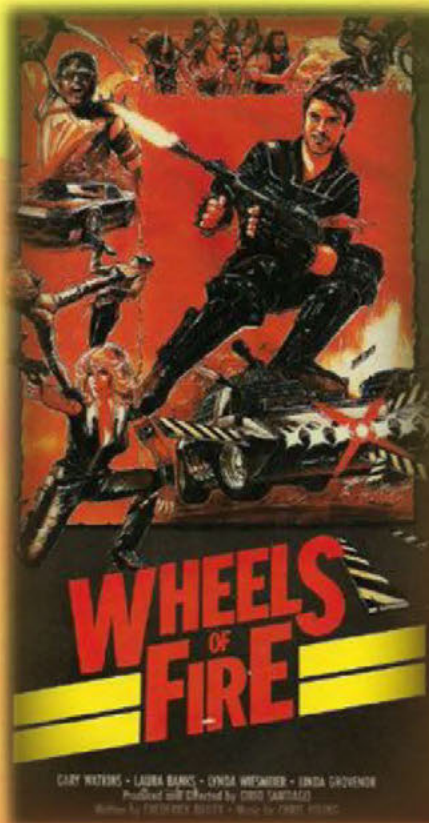
Following Miller's success, Australia's little sister wanted a look in. *Battletruck* (or *Warlords of the 21st Century*) was what New Zealand brought to the table in 1982. Directed by Californian Harley Cokeliss for American company New World Pictures, *Battletruck* is set in a post-World War III/oil war environment where political and financial anarchy are par for the course and law holds little meaning. As with *Mad Max*, all petrol reserves have run dry and what little remains has been commoditised and

hidden from warlords and mercenaries. Jacob Straker, a former government official played by James Wainwright, rules the lawless wastes and leads a band of former soldiers along with his daughter Corlie (Annie McEnroe). Traveling in armoured, weaponised vehicles known as (you guessed it) battle trucks, they happen across an impressive diesel supply stowed away in a compound believed to have been radioactive. Corlie runs away from camp after refusing to lend a hand in executing the compound's owners.

The Warriors' own Michael Beck plays Hunter - think *LoTR*'s Strider on a motorcycle. He rescues the desperate Corlie, and after a temporary arrangement on his farm, he sends her off to live with the Quaker-like community in the walled city of Clearwater Farm. She's quickly discovered by the mercenaries working under her father, and the vengeful Straker soon moves to attack the peaceful community. She manages to escape in all the commotion back to Hunter's farm (something of a habit by now). Straker strips the inhabitants of their weapons, women, and medicine. Inevitably, Hunter and Straker go head to head, or rather truck to truck. For *Clearwater's* champion, the best they can come up with is a bastardised VW Beetle. *Battletruck* may have slipped into obscurity riding the coat tails of *Mad Max*, but time has weathered it an altogether different film than its blatant inspiration.

A more obvious knock-off came in 1985 with blaxploitation pioneer Cirio H. Santiago's *Wheels of Fire*, a simple story of the Highway Warriors who ravage the blacktop. What's left of civilisation in the familiar post-apocalyptic setting is lauded over by the leader of the Warriors in his nuclear powered car. Protagonist Trace (Gary Watkins) is as much an avatar of his muscle car as Max was with his. Hell, the cars even look the same. In this case, Trace whizzes around in an early seventies Ford Mustang - black of course - complete with spikes on the grille and a jet engine, for when a V8 just isn't enough. The plot is a means to enable as many car chases, crashes, and fights as possible, and while that's no bad thing it's hard to give much of a damn. Perhaps it's the least entertaining of any of the Max clones, but it does go some way to explaining the success surrounding the grizzled outback road movie.

Drenched in grindhouse sensibility, Donald G. Jackson and R. J. Kizer's 1987 cult classic *Hell Comes to Frogtown* is perhaps the best to slither on out after Max. Following nuclear war, the toll of fertile men and women has drastically dropped. Subsequently, the government prioritises their existence in the face of possible extinction. But then there's also exiled creatures who mutated from common frogs and have kidnapped a group of nubile young women to use as sex slaves. Nomadic Sam (played by wrestler



Roddy Piper), who has left a string of pregnancies in his wake, is captured and becomes the prisoner of the female faction that took over in the wake of the nuclear war. They strap a bomb to his junk, which will blow if he strays from his guard. After discovering the mutants' crime, Sam is charged with the captive women's rescue and insemination. Unlike many of the other po-faced rip offs, Frogtown took itself about as seriously as Jeremy Clarkson does good taste. After all, Sam does drive around in a pink Chevy. It spawned a sequel in 1993 with the straight-to-VHS *Return to Frogtown*, lacking any of the original cast or the bonkers gung-ho humour.

In amongst Italy's beautifully lurid giallo pictures is a wave of imitations of successful American pictures. Imitation is no bad thing, great artists steal and all that, and it did serve to put a distinctly European feel on the Mad Max formula. Produced, co-written and directed by prolific Italian filmmaker Joe D'Amato, *Endgame* (Bronx lotta finale) is a 1983 flick set in 2025, after a nuclear holocaust leaves New York City an irradiated, but far from abandoned, waste. The destitute city is populated by packs of telepathic mutants, persecuted and preyed upon by gangs of survivors, who fancy themselves champions of Darwinism. The reality TV show *Endgame*, which pits hunters against gladiators in fights to the death, keeps the people pacified. One of the mutants recruits

Endgame veteran Ron Shannon (Al Cliver) to help her people across the desert wastes to safety. There's a whole heap of nasties in their way, including blind fighting monks, government agents and Shannon's once friend-turned-bad guy, Karnak (George Eastman).

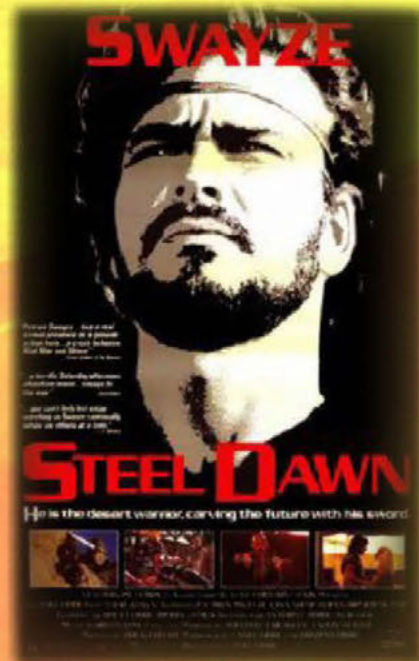
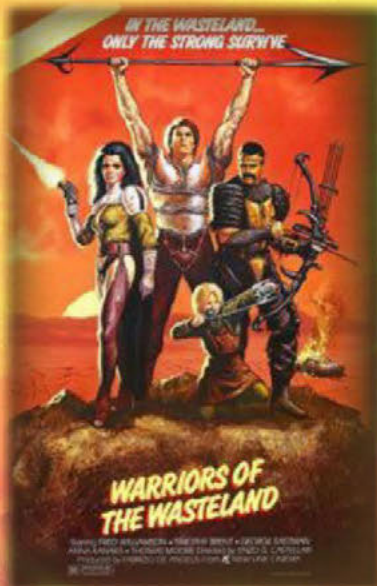
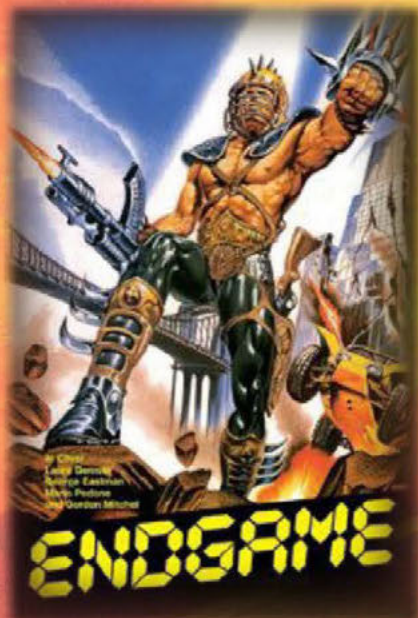
Released the same year was fellow Italian post-apocalyptic flick *The New Barbarians*, which enjoyed a US release a year later, under the more market friendly title *Warriors of the Wasteland*. Directed by Enzo G. Castellari, it pitches a group of ruthless bikers called The Templars who sprung up in the wake of a nuclear holocaust, hell-bent on wiping out whatever's left of humanity. Only the former Templar Scorpion can stop them, as he takes up arms to protect the people who wander the wastes with their caravans. It's a plot whose only purpose is to get to the next explosion, but the cars are equipped with enough gadgets to make James Bond green with envy and keep your attention firmly fixed on the carnage onscreen. It's hardly the dullest Mad Max rip off, but worlds away from the best.

Of course, there are a slew of films that appropriated the apocalypse according to Saint Max, but ditched the automobile completely. *Steel Dawn* took cues from Sergio Leone's *Man with No Name* trilogy and the look and setting laid down by George Miller. As with many of these

films, it sees a rugged loner (played by heartthrob Patrick Swayze) who takes it upon himself to help out a group of settlers who live under the constant threat of a gang after their water supply. It's a mess of a movie that does its best to capitalise on Mad Max and Swayze's sex appeal and newly-acquired stardom, but falls very, very short. It might be worth watching for the deliciously cheesy dialogue alone, but for story and action sequences you'll want to look elsewhere.

Peter Maris' 1986 flick *Land of Doom* is more than a little familiar, with a cast decked out like Judas Priest and a convoluted plot that makes you realise part of Mad Max's power is in its simplicity. The film follows the exploits of Harmony (Deborah Rennard), who takes it upon herself to stand up for the villagers on the bloody end of vicious raiders. Armed with her crossbow, she discovers wounded survivor Anderson (Garrick Dowhen). Despite her reticence, she recruits him to help in her vengeance quest: to take down the tyrannical leader of the raiders in order to get justice for her people. While it sets up Harmony as the hero of the piece, she ends up having to get rescued by the dashing Anderson anyway.

Given how butch Mad Max and its successors were, it's easy to think it was all machismo, but *Cherry 2000* puts the record straight. Released in 1988 and set in



2017, the film sees Sam Treadwell (David Andrews), a successful business man, who lives in a world where tech, sex, and economics have blurred into one kind of commodity, where contracted dates are signed for and the 'perfect' partner is an android-only option. When his robo-wife, the sensual Cherry model 2000, short-circuits, Treadwell looks for a new body for his 'girlfriend's' memory chip. Settling for nothing less than Cherry, he hires spunky tracker Edith Johnson, played by Melanie Griffith. Their quest soon takes them into the lawless Zone, where Sam discovers his perfect woman isn't one of circuits and compliance, but the redheaded tracker at his side. Directed by Steve De Jarnatt (who went on to direct 11 episodes of Lizzie McGuire), Cherry 2000 has plenty of dusty encounters with bikes and jeeps on sand dunes, and rocket launchers. Don't forget rocket launchers. With its compelling score and more recognisable sci-fi visuals, it's a largely different film to Mad Max, but offers more of a satirical look into the future that's more Sleeper than Road Warrior.

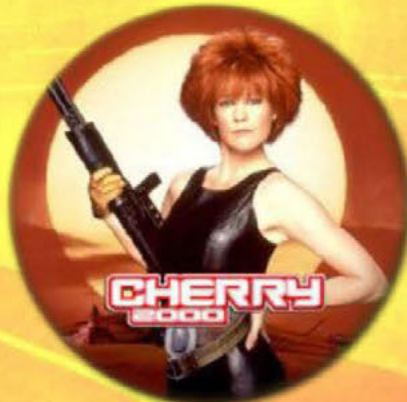
Americans, New Zealanders, and Italians all had a punt at Max, and in 1986, so did the Japanese. Originally serialised in manga format penned by Sho Fumimura under the name Buronson, *Fist of the North Star* (Hokuto no Ken) was set in the usual post-nuclear war wasteland and centred on a brooding loner. In this case it's Kenshiro, skilled in Hokuto, a particular potent brand of martial arts

which utilises pressure points on the body for maximum gory deaths. He spends his life fighting raiders and ravagers who, as per usual, prey on the weak and innocent. Before long, it was adapted into two different animes, which racked up over 150 episodes between them. The first animated film, however, was released in 1986 and involved the same staff and cast as the series, adapting the manga from the beginning, albeit with several flights of poetic license. It wasn't until the early nineties that an English dub was released, just as the medium was getting a real foothold in America and Europe. The visual stylings of the franchise took huge cues from the wasteland of Mad Max, and it doesn't take a stretch of the imagination to see that Kenshiro is decked out like the Road Warrior himself. *Fist of the North Star* might not enjoy the same success as its inspiration, but proves that the post-nuclear war wastelanders are a global concept. After all, if war strikes, we all go to hell.

How inspired director John Carpenter was when making that other cult action movie *Escape from New York* is up for debate. But leading man Kurt Russell has recently revealed that he was blown away by George Miller's scuzzy classic and went to Carpenter with the idea, though the director assured him he had something better. Russell added to the look of Snake Plissken, who capitalises on Max's appearance and demeanour. There were

filmmakers who took elements from both films and made lesser knock-offs, one of which was released in 1982. 1990: *Bronx Warriors* also took cues from *The Warriors*, and centres on Hammer (Vic Morrow in his last complete film role), a policeman who infiltrates the Bronx, which, having been declared a 'no man's land', has devolved into a breeding ground for bizarre street gangs. Directed by Enzo G. Castellari (who also helmed *The New Barbarians*), *Bronx Warriors* is trash, for sure, but fun trash all the same. Another in the surprisingly large pool of Italian films which blended both action films was the 1983 flick *2019: After the Fall of New York*, directed by Sergio Martino. Like so many others listed above, it follows a gruff mercenary in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, out to save the last fertile woman on earth. It's a shameless rip-off, and given that it makes no attempt to hide that fact, it's actually pretty good fun.

Mad Max might remain the definitive post-apocalyptic franchise, one which continues to assert its power with the upcoming remake. The extent of its legacy can be gleaned in the swathe of films that revved out of its success, some of which became cult classics in their own right. There's plenty of troubled loners in muscle cars to tide you over until Tom Hardy wows the world. And they say people don't believe in heroes anymore.

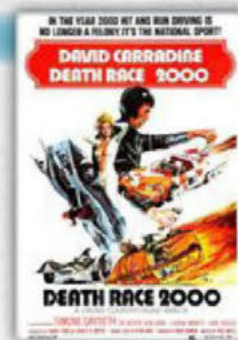


FOUR WHEEL FUNNY

It wasn't all wasteland warriors, muscle cars and mutants in the wake of Mad Max. The late seventies and early eighties brought with it daft comedy capers where silly cars and races were the name of the game. We take a look at some of the best of the car farces.

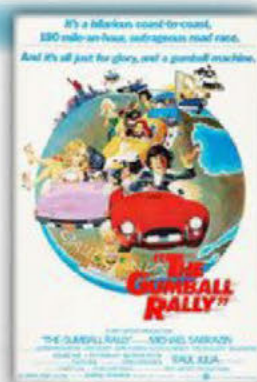
Death Race 2000 (1975)

Setting aside the dreadful 2008 do-over, Paul Bartel's cult classic was a high octane peek into a dystopian future, and produced by Roger Corman who optioned the short story *The Racer* by Ib Melchior. Following an oil crisis in the mid-seventies, the United Provinces of America is formed and lorded over by a totalitarian dictatorship, headed up by Mr President (Sandy McCallum). Some years later, the coast-to-coast three-day Annual Transcontinental Road Race begins, where its racers earn points from hit-and-run killings. Sporting a cast including David Carradine and Sylvester Stallone as Frankenstein and Machine Gun respectively, *Death Race 2000* leaves rival *Rollerball* coughing in its dust.



The Gumball Rally (1976)

Directed and co-written by Charles Bail, *The Gumball Rally* tells the story of a coast-to-coast road race, whose impact spawned a host of car-themed comedies. The film's inspired by the real-life Cannonball Baker Sea-To-Shining-Sea Memorial Trophy Dash, an unsanctioned car race that spawned the Gumball 3000 races in the wake of the film's popularity. Unfulfilled businessman Michael Bannon (Michael Sarrazin) gathers his fellow petrol heads and sets off on a race from New York City to Long Beach, California. There are no rules except for 'no catalytic converter and no 55-mile-per-hour speed limit'. After learning of the race, LAPD Lt. Roscoe (Norman Burton) is hot on their tailgates and tries to stop them in a slew of spectacular mishaps. Outfoxing the cops and Roscoe's personal vendettas, Bannon soon gives the Gumball signal to race back to New York, beginning the whole silly race all over again.



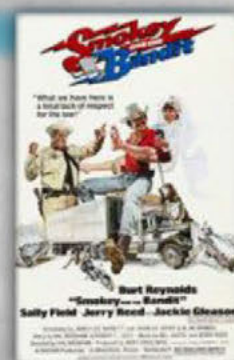
The Cannonball Run (1981)

One of the films inspired by *The Gumball Rally* was *The Cannonball Run*. The plot is largely the same, with a group of eccentric motor heads rallying in Connecticut to compete in a cross-country car race. Sporting a fabulous cast of Burt Reynolds, Roger Moore, and Farrah Fawcett among many others, the film proved to be one of the year's biggest financial successes. Strikingly similar with the Safety Enforcement Unit on them from the starting line, but it's the kooky characters which sets it apart from its contemporaries. Whether it's Dom DeLuise's superhero alter-ego Captain Chaos, or Jack Ellam sporting a huge needle as Dr Van Helsing, it's impossible not to be won over by its charm. Think live action *Wacky Races* and you're probably about there. Followed by two lesser sequels, *The Cannonball Run* remains the best of the bunch.



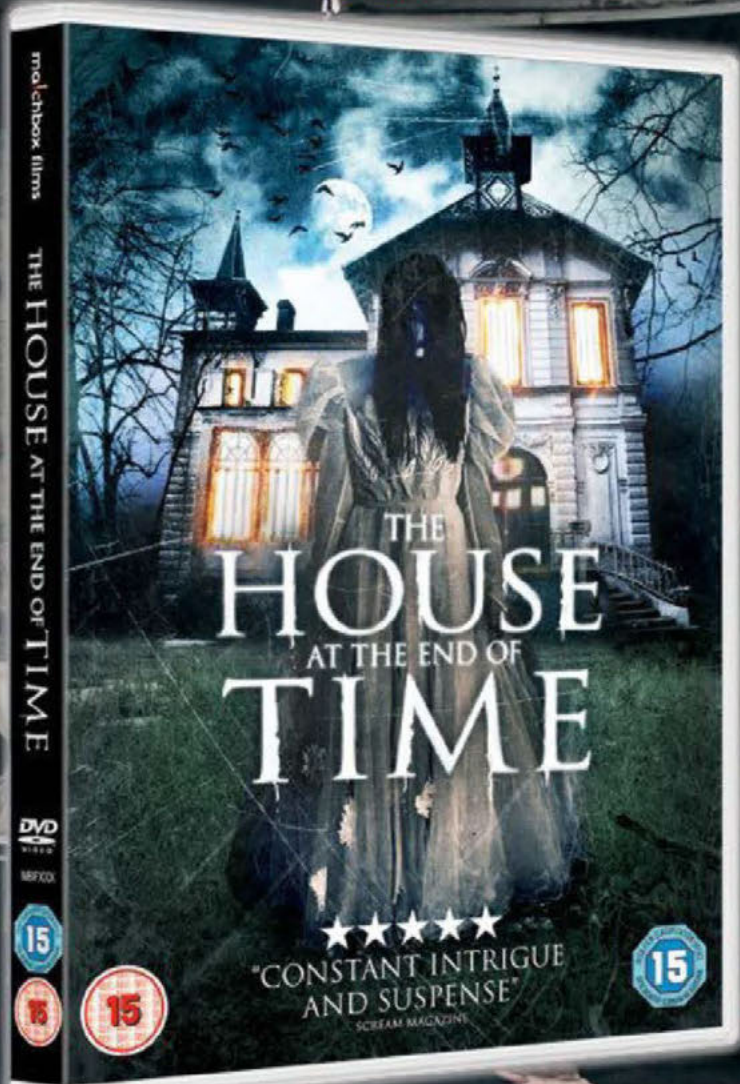
Smokey and the Bandit (1977)

Following a similar format to *The Gumball Rally*, albeit on a smaller and faster-paced scale, was *Smokey and the Bandit*, which starred Burt Reynolds as legendary trucker Bo 'Bandit' Darville. He's called in to help two rich Texans haul a load of Coors beer from Georgia to Texas, to quench their particular thirst. Other truckers have tried and failed and it's up to Bandit to get the job done. He recruits his bud Cledus 'Snowman' Snow (Jerry Reed) and dopey basset hound Fred to drive the truck, while he's up front in a sleek black Pontiac Trans Am. A short stretch into the journey, Bandit picks up runaway bride Carrie (Sally Field) sparking a feature-length car chase with incompetent police sheriff Buford T. Justice (Jackie Gleason), whose son Carrie left at the altar. It's farcical and more than a little fantastical, but makes for a thrilling ride.



★★★★★
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The world of MAD MAX wasn't confined to the screen, as we find out when we look at the spin-off games the franchise influenced. . .

GAMING TO THE MAX



By Ed Fortune

Part of the appeal of the world of *Mad Max* is how close it is to the real world. Anyone who's had to get on a crowded commuter train can easily imagine a place where it's all gone to hell and society has collapsed to the point where everyone is free from the constraints of the 9 to 5. When looked at that way, it's easy to see why games that give the user a violent yet fun look at the end of the world can be so appealing.

These days, it's practically impossible to launch a major motion picture without there being some tie-in video game coming out at the same time. *Mad Max: Fury Road* is no stranger to this, with *Just Cause* games developer Avalanche Studios producing a third-person sandbox game that will allow players to explore the world of *Mad Max* for themselves. The plot revolves around the theft of Max's iconic Interceptor vehicle and will introduce the deformed mechanic Chumbucket. With an improvised weapons-crafting function and enhanced melee combat featuring heavily, the game sounds like a sharp departure from the movies and may well yet be just another third-person sandbox game. However, it will join a long line of video games that have *Mad Max* as a source of inspiration.

Mad Max 2 had its own spin-off game: 1990's *Mad Max* for the Nintendo Entertainment System. Despite its fairly

auto assault



ROADWAR 2000



CARMAGEDDON



BORDERLANDS



CAR WARS DELUXE EDITION



crude graphics, it was a lot of fun and had two very simple modes. One was a top-down driving game, in which you guided Max's car around the wasteland, shooting up punks and avoiding natural (and not so natural) road hazards. The other version was a Commando-style shooter where Max left his car to shoot baddies and scavenge supplies. Levels inevitably ended in a *Thunderdome*-style boss fight, and like many NES games of the era, didn't actually have a proper end.

The same movie was a clear inspiration for *Outlander*, the 1992 home console game. In fact, it was originally intended as a tie-in product but the developers took so long they lost the license. Essentially a driving game with guns and explosions, one of its most memorable features was that in addition to scavenging for fuel and ammo, one could also collect cuddly toys. It seems that in the grim post-nuclear world, plushies are worth their weight in gold.

Max's radiation-soaked fingerprints can be seen across the entire racing genre. The year 2000's over the top game *Carmageddon* featured the black Interceptor as a special vehicle, and PC driving game *Insane* featured the same car as an example of how you could modify your ride. It's almost guaranteed that if you've got a racing game, you can find a version of the Interceptor.

1995's *Full Throttle* was a PC game set in a dystopian future where everyone seemingly had taken to the highways, fighting it out in an attempt to survive the apocalypse. Developed for LucasArts by industry legend Tim Schafer, it featured a strong story but left a lot to be desired in terms of action and adventure. It used the famous SCUMM engine and though it had a great (if disjointed) plot, this dialogue-heavy point and click game failed to capture the public's imagination the same way the likes of *Dig* and *Monkey Island* did.

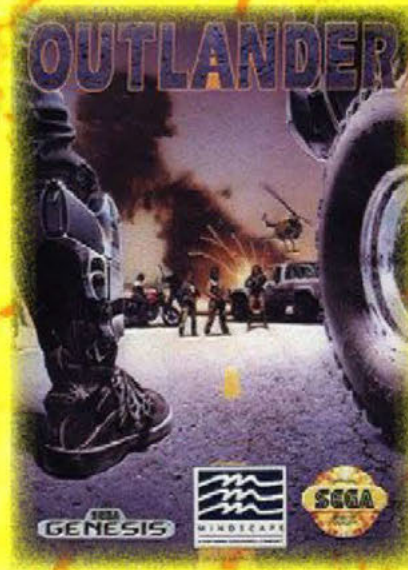
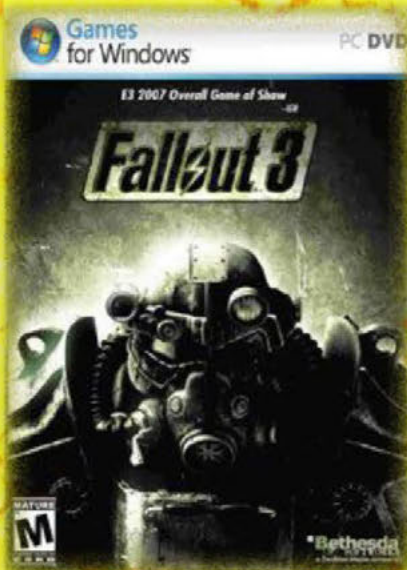
Of course, when you mention wastelands and radiation-soaked worlds, the game most people think about is *Fallout*. The massively popular franchise has always directly referenced the film; a version of Max's leather jacket and shotgun is present in every game, and the art of *Fallout* is filled with imagery that looks like it could have been easily taken from the movie. Another game that heavily borrowed from all things Max-related was the original incarnation of *Borderlands*, which then rapidly changed due to fan input and whimsy.

Full Throttle and *Fallout* weren't the only games to introduce a spot of roleplaying to war-torn wasteland. Those craving a bit more in the realms of car based murder and mayhem may have enjoyed *Auto Assault*; NCSOFT's attempt at a post-apocalyptic MMORPG had mutants against humans

against cyborgs. The game suffered from some severe balancing issues and really didn't interest enough people to remain viable. It did have some rather stunning desert vistas and enjoyed some epic carnage. Sadly, the game was folded in 2007 due to a lack of interest.

For those who prefer their games old school, '80's classic *Roadwar 2000* was a strategic RPG that saw you trail across a barren landscape looking for eight scientists who could cure the world of the horrible virus that had caused the apocalypse. Essentially a crude exercise in resource management, you controlled a roster of road warriors and loonies, and frequently took on a surprising number of idiots and murderers. It's been cited as the inspiration for retro-style crisis management games such as *Dwarf Fortress*, though mostly it's just a good example of the sort of strategy RPG common to the era.

It's also the close cousin of *Autoduel*, a well thought of PC game that successfully simulated the classic board game *Car Wars*. The PC version was fairly crude; it lacked the flexibility of its pen-and-paper cousin, so the range of race tracks and weapons were limited. The essential game was there though; take a car, load it up with weapons, mines and explosives and head out into the desert to raise hell.



Steve Jackson Games are still making money from the *Car Wars* board game. Regarded by many as the quintessential game of radiation and road violence, the original game had bags and bags of accessories and add-ons, but it all boiled down to the same thing: race your black sports car against your foe and blow him up. Or better yet, modify the thing, so it looked like something from the movies. Steve Jackson himself has promised that there will be a Kickstarter to relaunch the game in 2015, and it's fair to say that it's coming very, very soon. However, the Texas-based games company has just recovered from its last Kickstarter, the multi-million dollar earning *Ogre/GEV*, a classic tank combat game which came in a coffee table-sized box. *Car Wars* is predicted to match this easily, in both scope and size.

Car Wars is frequently confused with *Thunder Road*, the much more commercial version of the same thing that was produced by MB roughly at the same time. The box of *Thunder Road* looked as much like *Mad Max* as was legally possible, and the game featured some brilliant models and novel game mechanics. Essentially a racing game, the titular *Thunder Road* was a series of modular boards. The idea was that you kept extending the board, so anything left behind on the last section simply blew up. It was literally a race to the end, both of the board and of the world. It also had some rather fun gyrocopter models, which were great fun to play with but always got blown up.

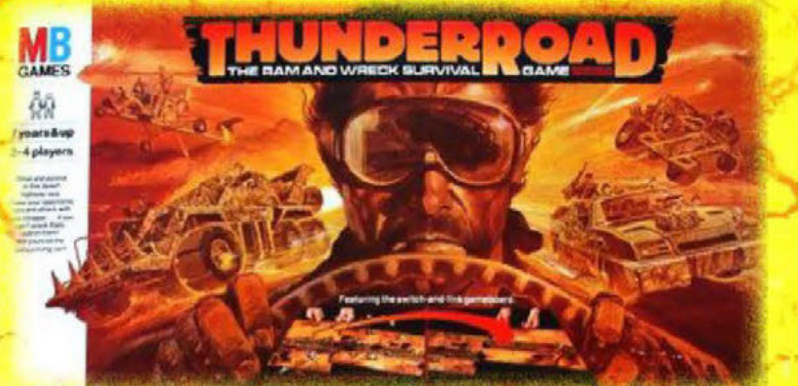
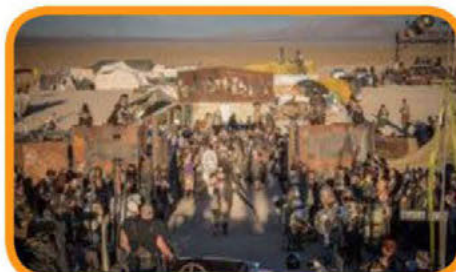
It's impossible to talk about these sort of games without mentioning Games Workshop's contributions to the genre. *Dark Future* had it all; clever rules and a surreal apocalyptic setting created by horror maestro Kim Newman. A bonkers world in which Elvis was an elite secret agent, the game was scaled so you could easily use Matchbox cars, which was nifty because they produced their own range of heavily armed sci-fi vehicles at the time. The other road game they made was *GorkaMorka*, which had plenty of sneaky references to the *Max* movies but suffered from being too focused on Games Workshop's own branding. Neither game is in print, sadly, and they're unlikely to see a return.

This light smattering of blood-soaked automotive carnage is only the tip of a crimson iceberg; Cars, guns and gaming have now been inextricably linked and jolly good fun it is too. See you in the Thunderdome.

Keeping It Real

Post-apocalyptic LARP is nothing new; *Mad Max* came out just as LARP was really hitting its stride and it's remarkably easy to mix medieval-style fantasy costumes with the odd punk rock accessory to create a new experience. Old buildings, derelict holiday camps and Scout sites have all been drafted in the past, and a body of short-lived post-apocalyptic games have ran across the British Isles since the '80s. The most successful of these is *Wasteland UK*, a game that mixes survival horror with a heavy *Mad Max* vibe. Missions often involve facing gang bosses or scavenging for resources, with time limited in certain areas due to that pesky radioactive fallout. It makes extensive use of NERF weapons and has a distinctly British feel to it; the game has won awards in the past for its approach, and it's been the subject of documentaries about LARP. Another game worth mentioning is *Fallout LARP*, from the Czech Republic; it's a faithful simulation of the video game and has produced some very interesting kit. Both of these lack two unique *Mad Max* elements though; large deserts and heavily modified motor vehicles.

For those, you will have to travel all the way to the USA, namely the Southern California desert, for the *Wasteland Weekender*. An odd mix of music festival, LARP and cosplay, the *Wasteland Weekender* is a *Mad Max* convention in the desert. People rock up in working replicas of the movies' vehicles, dress up as post-apocalyptic punks and even participate in arena fights with a Thunderdome style theme. Gyrocopters fly overhead (weather permitting) and games of Jugga are organised and played. It's a weird, wasted party in the middle of nowhere. Every attendee must be in costume, and they can draw their inspiration from the entire post-apocalyptic genre. The *Wasteland Weekender* is not a game as such; it's more of a very elaborate fancy dress festival where pretending to be someone else is permitted but not compulsory. It's also proof that the full *Mad Max* experience is possible without ending the world.



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CREEPY CARS



by Nigel Watson

With our focus on the demons of the road, STARBURST takes a look at those possessed vehicles that are driven by weird forces down the highway to hell and back...

Cars are more than just things that move us from point A to B, they reflect our own personalities and status in life. We select and customise them to our own particular taste and style. Your car shows off as much about yourself as your clothes or home. Indeed, filmmakers carefully choose the type of cars their characters own and drive, as a means to connect and identify them with the narrative and the audience.

It's not much of a leap of imagination to give cars a personality of their own. People often give names to their cars (unpublishable ones if they break down) and imbue them with human character traits. The front of cars give them a happy or sad face and can be ascribed arrogant or friendly attributes, even the number plate can be an inspiration for its characteristics or name.

Our brains are wired to assign human forms, behaviour and emotions to natural phenomena, animals and inanimate objects. We anthropomorphise things that act or look like us. This makes us feel we should care for the nonhuman entity and it also means the entity has independent actions deserving of reward or punishment. In the case of a car, if it runs well we mentally promise to give it a clean and service, if it breaks down we feel more inclined to punish it (we all have Basil Fawlty moments when we'd like to thrash a car back to life).

Not surprisingly, the world of TV and cinema is full of anthropomorphic cars. From childhood, we are exposed to talking cars, especially in cartoons, which reinforces our natural ability to humanise objects.

1952 was a particularly good year for this type of cartoons. Tex Avery directed *One Cab's Family* for MGM, and the Walt Disney production of *Susie: The Little Blue Coupe* was directed by Clyde Geronimi. *Susie* covers her life story from smart new motor and eventual downhill ride to the scrap heap, *One Cab's Family* is more anthropomorphic with a baby cab being born in the 'motor'nity ward'. The baby grows to have a love for speed



ONE CAB'S FAMILY



SUSIE: THE LITTLE BLUE COUPE



BRUM



WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT?



SPEED BUGGY



CARS

and racing, after a crash he has to decide between being a cab or a racer.

The vehicles and cartoons of that era are celebrated by Robert Zemeckis in his 1988 film, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* Benny the Cab is prominently featured as a street-smart yellow taxi who helps Eddie Valiant (Bob Hoskins) and Roger Rabbit to escape from several scrapes. Like a human cab driver, he has outspoken opinions about everything.

On TV, the 1970s gave us the *Speed Buggy* cartoon series by Hanna-Barbera Productions. He was a fibreglass dune buggy voiced by Mel Blanc, who delivered such memorable catchphrases as: "Vroom-a-zoom-zoom" and "Rodger Dodger!" The stories were very much like the adventures of Scooby-Doo; indeed, he even turns up in a couple of their episodes. Groovy.

Ragdoll, the company that gave us the *Teletubbies*, also produced 78 episodes of *Brum* from 1991 to 2002. Brum is a cute, small, sentient yellow version of a 1920s Austin 7, who lives in a car museum. He doesn't talk, but communicates by swivelling or flashing his headlights, honking his horn, and by opening his bonnet or doors - who needs stupid words with such a repertoire?

The *Magic School Bus* cartoon series (1994-1998) had a remit to teach children about the world of science. The bus can drive itself, though is commonly driven by Ms Frizzle who takes her class on field trips. When needed, the bus can convert into a spaceship, aircraft, submarine, or even into an animal. It can even shrink in size for fantastic voyages, unthinkable for any normal bus. Handy!

Pixar Animations Studios' *Cars* (2006) and *Cars 2* (2011) feature a whole universe of computer animated anthropomorphic cars. The star of both is Lightning McQueen, a NASCAR sports car, who encounters old-timer vehicles like Mater, a rusty-yet-lively tow truck, and Doc Hudson, a former racing champion. The first film challenges his arrogant and ambitious behaviour and the folk at Radiator Springs imbue him with

old-time values and sportsperson-like qualities. The second film involves a plot to undermine the World Grand Prix that Lightning is taking part in to help promote eco-friendly fuels. Good luck with that.

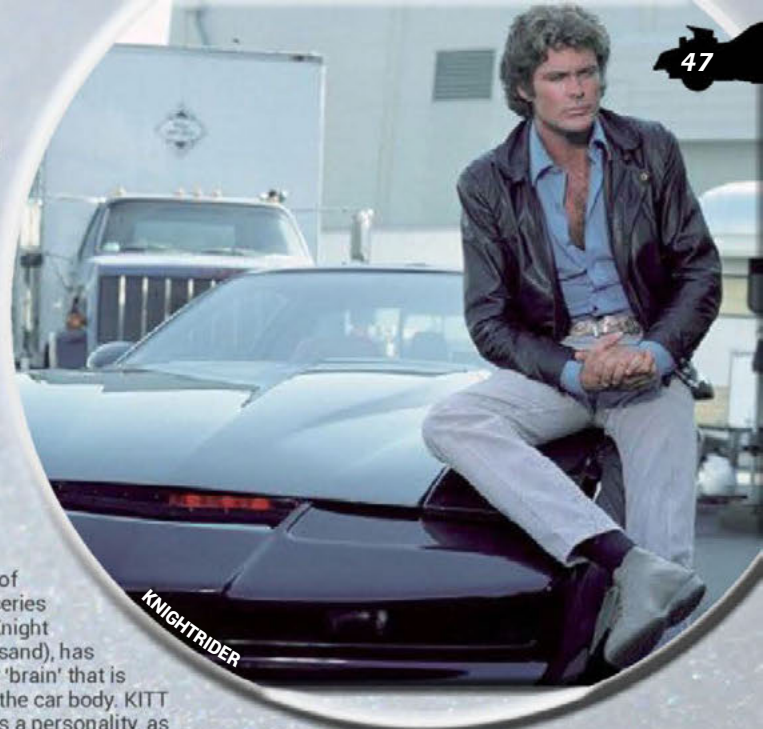
When it comes to live action films, there has to be an explanation for the independent actions and human-like qualities of the vehicle. The car star of the *Knight Rider* TV series (1982-1986), KITT (Knight Industries Two Thousand), has a powerful computer 'brain' that is linked to sensors on the car body. KITT is self-aware and has a personality, as well as lots of technological gadgets at its disposal to help it to fight crime on the behalf of humanity.

Often more exotic influences give cars their personality. One example is the 1965 NBC TV series, *My Mother the Car*, starring Jerry Van Dyke as David Crabtree. As the jaunty title song explains: 'But believe it or not - my mother dear - decided she'd come back - As a car.' That's right, his recently-deceased mum is reincarnated into the body of a 1928 Porter car, and speaks to him through the radio. The car is only fit for the scrapyard, but David likes the look of it and when he gets into it the radio announces, in his mother's voice (Ann Sothern), that she has been reincarnated in this vehicle. Only David can hear this voice and the car, actually a modified 1924 Ford T-tub, is restored in all the finery of an old lady. The car 'sports' a white tonneau cover, brass radiator and a plush interior worthy of a Victorian parlour. The run

of 30 episodes have been rated highly... as one of the worst TV shows ever. Darn it!

A 1964 episode of *The Twilight Zone* features a living car. Its driver hits and kills a boy on a bike, and drives off without helping him. The car in *You Drive* (Season 5, episode 14 of TZ), repeatedly plays back a radio report of the accident and on one occasion stops at the crime scene. Eventually, it tracks down the heartless driver and drives him to the police station to meet his fate. Does it come to life due to moral outrage and a sense of injustice, or is it possessed by the spirit of the dead boy who seeks revenge? Yet another case of reinCARnation, maybe... though the closing narration warns us to check underneath the chrome to see if your vehicle has a conscience, as you won't be able to conceal your crimes and you'll end up driving in the *Twilight Zone*.

The fear of machines coming alive is



THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS



MY MOTHER THE CAR



THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE - JOY RIDE
TWILIGHT ZONE - A THING ABOUT MACHINES



CARS 2

TWILIGHT ZONE - YOU DRIVE





the theme
of an earlier
Twilight Zone
story. In *A Thing*

About Machines, aired in 1960 (Season 2, episode 4), all the electrical appliances in Bartlett Finchley's (Richard Haydn) home conspire against him. Even when he escapes outside, his car chases him literally to his death.

Joy Ride in *The New Twilight Zone*, aired in 1987 (Season 2, episode 33), returns to the concept of a spooky vehicle. In this story, joy riders find that when they get inside a classic car, it takes them back in time to when a cop was killed by the car's driver. The driver never confessed to the crime during his lifetime, so the car embodies his need to tell the world what really happened.

Far more popular and long-running is Herbie, the Volkswagen Beetle, who debuted in *The Love Bug* in 1969, and has starred in five further movies, plus a short-lived TV series in 1982. *The Love Bug*, a TV movie screened in 1997, explains how he came to life. In the process of being built by Dr Gustav Stumpfel, a picture of his deceased wife dropped into a vat of molten steel and his love for her animated Herbie. Sounds logical. Anyway, the German engineer was also forced to use the same metal vat to build a rival Horace, the Hate Bug, by dropping

a picture of Herbie's nasty, former owner into the molten brew. A lot easier than Dr Frankenstein's method of animating life by mixing, matching and stitching together human parts blasted with lightning bolts. We suppose we all literally live and learn from such experiments...

Some cars are just plain evil and we don't know why. A poster for *The Car* (1977), asks 'Is it a phantom, a demon, or the Devil himself?' Who cares when this customised Lincoln Continental III is out to kill you! It focuses its hit and run activities on a small US community in Utah, and is basically *Jaws* on wheels.

Dabbling with the occult and Devil worshipping brought *The Hearse* to life in 1980. Jane Hardy's (Trish Van Devere) auntie's coffin has vanished after the hearse that was carrying her crashed. As Jane discovers more about her aunt's nefarious activities, she is haunted by her spirit that lurks in her old home, and by the hearse and its sinister driver that prowls the back roads for victims. Must say, a hearse is the ideal vehicle for a shortcut to death and the beyond.

Christine is probably the most famous car possession story. Based on a story by Stephen King, it was effectively translated to the big screen by John Carpenter in 1983. Christine is a red and white 1958 Plymouth Fury, which in the film simply becomes evil as soon as her parts are assembled on the production line. The novel has her possessed by the dead spirits of Roland LeBay's family, not surprising as his daughter choked to death and his wife committed suicide inside the car. Christine makes her owners obsessed with her and is quick to kill anyone who challenges this special relationship. Unlike any other car, she has the ability to repair herself and is virtually indestructible, making her a four-wheeled Terminator that always comes back.

It was inevitable that extraterrestrials would come onto the scene at some stage.

When a meteor crashes
on a remote island,

construction workers use a Caterpillar D9 bulldozer to unearth it. Once they start to move it, a blue light emerges and begins to live inside the bulldozer. Whatever possesses it isn't very happy with the men, and goes on a mission to kill them off. *Killdozer!*, a 1974 TV movie, has a good pedigree as it is based on a 1944 novella by Theodore Sturgeon. His original story had workers uncovering an ancient temple that released this murderous life force, but we all have to change with the times and aliens from outer space were more hip in the seventies.

Stephen King's 1978 short story *Trucks* has huge trucks taken over by an unknown force that is so powerful humanity looks doomed to serve these new masters. In King's movie version of it, *Maximum Overdrive* (1986), an alien force takes over inanimate objects and trucks. This time they are thwarted when a UFO is shot down, but the nasty trucks make another return in the *Trucks* TV movie remake in 1997. Still, they are not a patch on the diabolical truck in Steven Spielberg's 1971 TV movie, *Duel*. It brings to life every driver's nightmare of being tailgated by a truck, which in this case takes on the form of a mechanical monster that has to be killed before it kills you.

The cursed aliens came in mega force in the live action 2007 *Transformers* movie. Their original arrival was in the 1980s, with four animated TV series and *The Transformers: The Movie* in 1986 linking with their storylines. In turn, the stories were based on toys that could transform from robots into cars or other inanimate objects.

Transformers and *Cars* are movie franchises that look as if they will run and run, and we can expect more horrors like *Super Hybrid* (2010). It features a shape-shifting car that can repair itself and kills anyone who gets inside it. In essence, it seems to be a living creature that uses the form of a normal car to trick its intended victims.

There we have it, just about every sort of possessed vehicle imaginable. Please drive safely... if your car will let you...



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GENRE

DOWN UNDER

by Samantha Ward

MAD MAX may have opened the antipodean cinema to the world, but there's more to the Aussies than beer, barbies, and crappy soap operas as we find out...



There is no doubt that Australia has produced masterful pieces of cinema, with directors such as Peter Weir and Baz Luhrmann, who have both made prominent stamps in film history. But what about the other side of the film industry? A place where George Miller started his career. The one that belongs to independent features and filmmakers, where a ludicrous and exciting culture lives. Outside of Hollywood, there was an era of filmmakers who basically had no money but what they lacked in funding they more than made up for with imagination and skills. Yes, it's the B-movie, low-budget, grindhouse style that can divide a room of film lovers like marmite at a toast convention, but there isn't anything like exploitation cinema down under.

During the Australian New Wave movement, between the early '70s and late '80s, Australia was producing low budget horrors, comedies, and action

films. The introduction of the R-rating at the time also encouraged filmmakers to cater to a mature audience. Thus the combination of sexploitation, violent action and schlock-horror made a formula that was cost effective, as well as having farcical titles and covers which sold themselves. There was an international wave of protestors fighting for equality at this time, and this was of course reflected through the films and the way they were marketed. Australian filmmakers need only take advantage of the vast and dusty outback to create scenes with seemingly excellent production value. Where the films lacked in special effects, it made up for it with obscene sex, nudity, brutality and very occasionally, outstanding performances from some of the industry's biggest talent. This was 'Ozploitation' in its heyday, a more recent term coined by highly recommended documentary, *Not Quite Hollywood: The Wild, Untold Story*

of *Ozploitation*, directed by Mark Hartley, an Australian director whose previous works are mostly of the music video variety, now famed for his documentaries that look back at the mad world of wild genre filmmaking. Ozploitation is a momentous period that any major fan of genre films should take note of. And more recently, it seems Australia are making a strong comeback with hard-hitting genre films, so it's about time we all caught up to this craze.

Wake In Fright (1971) is one of the most important Ozploitation films to watch, directed by Ted Kotcheff (*First Blood*). A cultural truth that was a frighteningly realistic portrayal of its time, starring Gary Bond as John, a teacher who wants to work in the big city and Donald Pleasence, as an alcoholic drifter with a PHD. This film was an Australian/American production, with a prominent British cast and a Canadian director, this multiculturalism allowed



WAKE IN FRIGHT, 1971



MAD DOG MORGAN, 1976



a real in-depth view of the society. It's set in a dried-out town known as The Yabba; a place where any kind of prospect or ambition is repressed, where visitors and citizens alike suffer under the immense peer pressure to do as the rest of the town people do - gamble and drink away your sorrows. It's the gripping downwards spiral of self-destruction that is most disturbing about this film. They were so bold to highlight the urban vulgarity not everyone wanted to accept. Kotcheff managed to show the startling isolation of the Outback with almost every shot. It didn't need a gigantic budget, a simple episodic plot with excellent acting talent is what really pulled this off. This was the beginning of honest and raw action/horror that would soon escalate, inspiring filmmakers to be more experimental and exploitative. Like making a viral video, except this was all the rage for nearly two decades.

It became clear to Australian filmmakers that for a low-budget film to get wider recognition, they must employ US actors. *Mad Dog Morgan* (1976) directed by Philippe Mora does just that by hiring Dennis Hopper. Based on the life of Dan Morgan, an Irish outlaw in Australia. It was exciting to have a renowned and critically acclaimed actor, though Hopper's method acting made the film a little difficult to shoot. Portraying a rum-drinking maniac, Hopper brought all the intensity he could to his role. It was the rawness of Hopper's performance that brought life and magic to the film. Although thought to be unsellable, with disturbing scenes of male rape and violent massacres, Mora proved many wrong when the film was sold at Cannes, and opened in many American theatres, being one of the first Australian films to get that kind of US opening.

Of course there is the *Mad Max* trilogy which was probably one of the most famous set of films to come out of the Ozploitation era and break out internationally. Set in a post-apocalyptic world filled with punks and high powered super cars, it reflected a trend with many low budget filmmakers in the '70s to create dystopian action films. It was a pumped-up action



MAD MAX, 1979

packed feature, sure to begin a theme of future films not just from Australia, but from Hollywood too. Australia brought about more violent road fury films; *Road Games* directed by Richard Franklin and starring Scream Queen Jamie Lee Curtis. Though it has some great car stunts, it was more serial killer horror than road rage. Pulling up alongside *Road Games* is the dystopian world of *Dead End Drive-In* directed by low-budget connoisseur Brian Trenchard-Smith. There are more recent films which most definitely took inspiration from *Mad Max* such as Neil Marshall's *Doomsday* and *Death Race* directed by Paul W.S. Anderson (a remake of the 1975 cult classic). It's crazy to think that George Miller's career took him from the dusty Australian roads to *Happy Feet*; let's hope his return directing *Mad Max: Fury Road* will be the comeback we have longed for.

1984's *Razorback* is another



unforgettable Ozploitation gem.

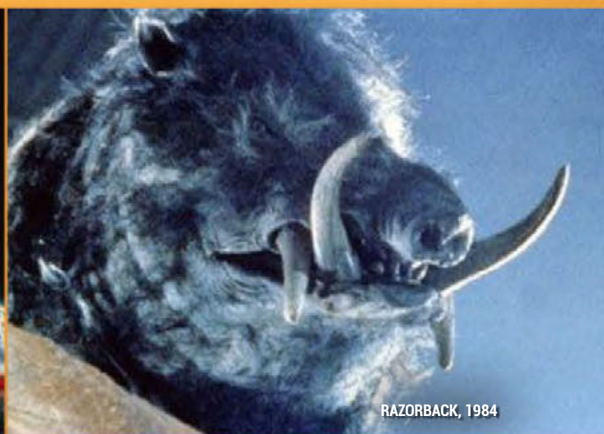
Australia's answer to *Jaws*, it definitely has the same suspense and hysteria. Wonderfully shot by director Russell Mulcahy, later known for *Highlander*, it's a classic creature feature; only this one is loose in the dusty, sun-beaten atmosphere of the outback. '*Nine Hundred Pounds of Marauding Tusk and Muscle*', the tagline could not be more self-explanatory. It's fun yet ferocious, with all the brutality and action that makes this an exploitation film. The DVD release even has a special 70-minute feature called '*Jaws on Trotters*'. It was extremely stylistic but didn't get much credit at first as critics thought there was no substance to the film. However the film gained a well-deserved cult following and has far more appreciation now for the production values and style it showed within the budget restraints it was shot under. This was also part of the wave of creature features to show



MAD MAX BEYOND THUNDERDOME, 1985



ROAD GAMES, 1981



RAZORBACK, 1984



TURKEY SHOOT (ESCAPE 2000), 1982



TURKEY SHOOT (ESCAPE 2000), 1982

up in the '80s and '90s which helped the film to get recognised in America. Even recently, B-movie monster flicks have been getting more and more popular, *Razorback* being ever prominent as a classic of this genre.

Not so classic, *Turkey Shoot* (1982, aka *Escape 2000*) was amusingly titled *Blood Camp Thatcher* for the British release. Once again directed by Englishman Brian Trenchard-Smith, a name known for creating low-budget films on a large scale. Smith has said he likes to make films with 'laughs and gasps'. He caters for a thrill-seeking audience. *Turkey Shoot* is perhaps one of his most sadistic films with inhumane scenes of characters being hunted down by fellow humans. It was cheap and nasty with ruthless character; entertainment at its roughest and rawest, you just won't believe what you're seeing most of the time.

Although when it comes to believing what you are seeing, who can believe *Sky Pirates* (1986) actually got made and finished? Directed by Colin Eggleston, inspired by Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of*



the Lost Ark, *Sky Pirates* is a horrendous attempt at creating a sci-fi/action satire. It was just terrible enough to change the reputation of the genre films in Australia and therefore, almost singlehandedly set off the giant rolling boulder that would be the downfall of Ozploitation. Truth be told, most of the films during this time were indeed terrible. For good reason people did not, and would not today, accept the sexism and racism portrayed in them. However, there are a few that do address these issues - although at times extreme, they are honest and provoke change. It is now incredibly rare to have a film so bold, that it is willing to show the negative connotations of its own cultural and political issues. When it comes to independent films, the wild genre was and remains under-appreciated.

The current climate of the Australian film industry isn't quite what it used to be, though we can say that of the industry worldwide. Similar to Hollywood's Superhero syndrome, most Australian films are now just locked into high budget drama/crime genres; it's not the diverse portfolio it once was. The

country has been lacking the infamous wild genre films they thrived on in the '70s and '80s. Say what you will about the quality of Ozploitation films, at least they were getting made. These low-budget films were the reason Australia had a film industry, but once that era seemed to be at an end, the film industry began dwindling with every penny spent. But all hope is not lost, there has been somewhat of a revival of Ozploitation films in the last decade or so.

Wolf Creek (2005) takes us back into the outback with the disturbingly chirpy serial killer Mick Taylor played by John Jarratt. The film was vaguely marketed as being based on true events, though mostly it was just inspired by the real-life murders of tourists by Ivan Milat and Bradley Murdoch. Director Greg McLean created the perfect grindhouse style and atmosphere for this slasher horror. On its initial release it had some dismissal for its raw brutality and treatment of women, whilst others said that it was breaking taboo with a direct depiction of violence and crime. With a mixture of reviews based on the cruelty and, what some called, outrageous bloodshed of the film, it's safe to say that *Wolf Creek* was the beginning of reviving Ozploitation cinema. *Wolf Creek 2* (2013) continues the barbaric killing spree by the vicious Taylor. The title definitely puts a stamp on the horror genre for Australia. It's fair to say that Greg McLean is somewhat of an auteur in the horror genre. McLean also wrote and directed the 2007 monster movie *Rogue*, in which a group of tourists are attacked by a giant vicious crocodile. Adding his own creature feature to the archives, *Rogue* was of course another that took inspiration from *Jaws*, but McLean puts his Aussie version together extremely well. Look out for *6 Miranda Drive*, McLean's next project.

Sean Byrne made a stunning directorial debut with *The Loved Ones* (2009), a noteworthy film with a truly twisted plot. It mixes teen drama and comedy that makes the film easily switch from family fun to deeply disturbing. Robin McLeavy gives an astounding and chilling performance reminiscent of Kathy Bates' character in *Misery*. This is horror



SKY PIRATES, 1986



WOLF CREEK, 2005





THE LOVED ONES, 2009



THE BABADOOK, 2014

that doesn't just thrive on the amount of violence incorporated but is also brilliantly written with a clever plot twist. It shows a maturity in the horror genre.

Another film with a strong structured plot, and a gasp-worthy twist, is *Red Hill* (2010) directed by Patrick Hughes. Set against the backdrop of small town Australia, this dark and dusty thriller drips with a gritty, western ambience. When a convicted murderer escapes, local police fear his return and with a new officer in town tensions rise and secrets are revealed. A throwback to the spaghetti westerns of the '70s, Hughes manages to achieve a lot with very little.

While not universally known, *Primal* (2010), directed by Josh Reed, is vicious and carnal. As a group of friends explore a cave that has ancient paintings within, they soon realise that it has a connection to a virus that throws away all human rationality when one of them turns into a primal beast whose only interest is feeding; and the only food is their former friends. It's a zombie/virus hybrid set out in the isolating wilderness, with a brilliant energy reminiscent of the '80s horror films.

Broadly speaking, the films of Ozploitation could mostly fit into two genres: horror and road/car action. And while not strictly a director of Australian films anymore, James Wan has made a name for himself in the genre world. With films like *Saw*, *Insidious* and *The Conjuring* under his belt, it's easy to see that there is a place for grindhouse genre film in mainstream cinema. And with Wan just releasing *Fast and Furious 7*, he branches out of pulse-stopping horror and into hard-hitting, fast paced, car-based action.

Australia has recently gone back to some of its favourite low-budget films, remaking them for a modern audience; *Long Weekend* (2008), *Patrick* (2013) and most recently, *Turkey Shoot* (2014) were all subject to this treatment. An obvious sign that Australia is attempting to bring life back to its film industry with wild genre films, but maybe it isn't ready to give a new director the creative freedom they would have with a new story or property similar to those of the Ozploitation heyday. *The Babadook*, written and directed by Jennifer Kent, is a perfect example of this. It's a low

budget, but amazingly creative film, and incredibly well received amongst genre fans. Although the film was backed by government bodies, Kent still needed more funding and Kickstarter was the place to get it. *The Babadook* shows us it can be done and that these films are wanted.

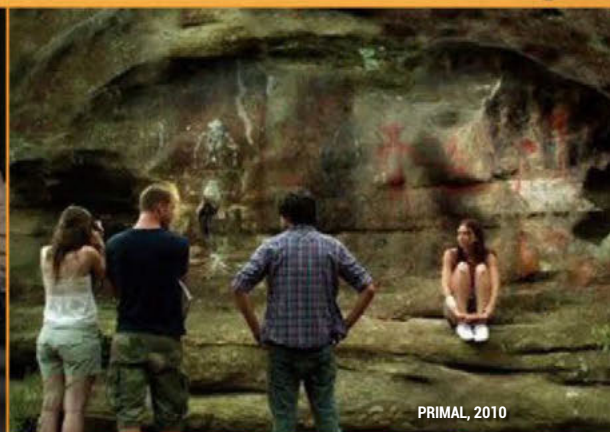
We know Australia can produce some terrific action and horror flicks, so hopefully we'll have some original work from talent like McLean coming back to the big screen and not just straight to DVD, hidden within the bargain bin waiting to be discovered. Although sometimes isn't that half the fun? Not all these exploitation films are worthwhile, but they all deserve some merit for successfully creating a completed film on a little-to-nothing budget. We have to thank this era of films for the amount of entertainment that comes from Australian talent today. It would be fantastic to see more lower budget films in the cinema. Films with higher creativity that do not sacrifice integrity for an overly sensitive audience, remaining as those thrilling genre films we've come to love so much.



WOLF CREEK 2, 2013



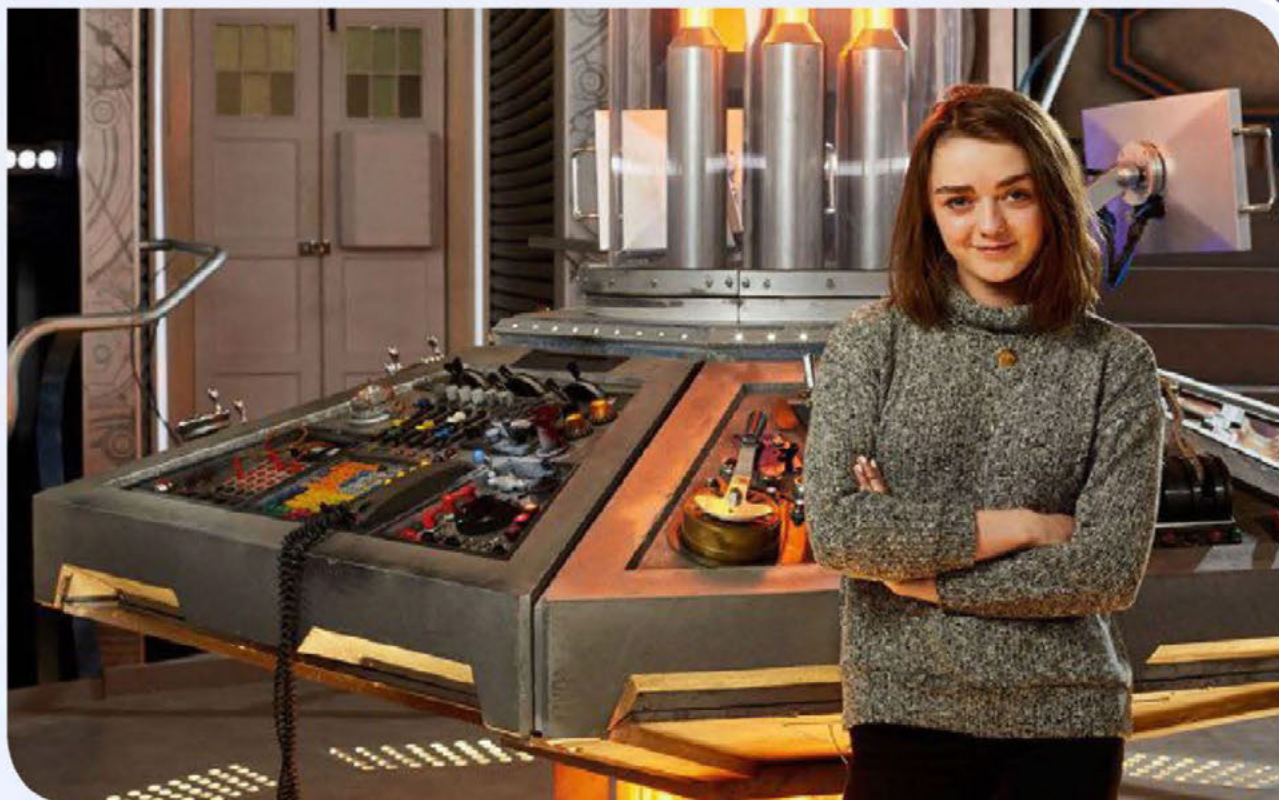
RED HILL, 2010



PRIMAL, 2010

OUTSIDE THE BOX

ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE WORLDS
OF DOCTOR WHO
WITH PAUL MOUNT



SERIES NINE

Following last month's announcement confirming the return of Missy/The Master (still played by Michelle Gomez) in Series Nine's two-part opener comes news of a further two-parter recently in production at the BBC's Roath Lock Studios, on location in Cardiff and at the medieval village reconstruction at nearby Cosmeston (last seen briefly in Series Eight's **Robot of Sherwood** episode). The first instalment of the new two-part historical story (set at the time of the Viking incursion into Britain) is entitled **The Girl Who Died** and is written by showrunner Steven Moffat and Jamie Mathieson (who wrote last year's **Mummy of the Orient Express** and **Flatline**), while the second episode will be written by Catherine Tregenna (who has previously written four acclaimed episodes of **Doctor Who** spin-off **Torchwood**) and will be entitled **The Woman Who Lived**. The episodes are directed by Ed Bazalgette whose most recent project, the BBC's reworking of the classic **Poldark** saga, is attracting rave reviews and high audiences on Sunday nights on BBC1.

Guest cast for the episodes include Bristol-born eighteen-year-old actress Maisie Williams, currently best-known for her role as Arya Stark in the long-running fantasy series **Game of Thrones**, plus stand-up comedian and long-time **Doctor Who** fan Rufus Hound, fresh from a stint in a West End production of **Dirty Rotten Scoundrels** alongside Robert Lindsay. "I'm so excited to be working on **Doctor Who** as it's such a big and important part of British Culture," said Maisie Williams on her first day of filming. "I can't wait to meet the cast and crew and start filming, especially as we'll be shooting not too far from my home town." Showrunner Moffat dug deep into his big box of cheerful casting cliché comments when he said, "We're thrilled to have Maisie Williams joining us on **Doctor Who**. It's not possible to say too much about who or what she's playing, but she is going to challenge the Doctor in very unexpected ways. This time he might just be out of his depth, and we know Maisie is going to give him exactly the right sort of hell."

Doctor Who returns to BBC One in the UK in the autumn.

Barry Newbery 1927-2015

Designer Barry Newbery, one of the last great luminaries of the early pioneering days of **Doctor Who**, passed away in February at the age of 88. Having joined the BBC at the end of the 1950s, Barry found himself working on **Doctor Who** as a replacement for original series designer Peter Brachacki, who left the series following disagreements with producer Verity Lambert. Barry was tasked with recreating the famous I.M. Foreman junk yard and Coal Hill school sets built for the pilot episode which was remounted at the request of series creator Sydney Newman. Barry worked alongside designer Raymond Cusick (designer of the Daleks) for several years and continued working on the series throughout the 1960s and 1970s and even into the 1980s. He worked on a total of 62 episodes from the original series across fourteen serials, his final credit on **Doctor Who** being the two-part Peter Davison serial **The Awakening** in 1984. During his career he also worked on a wide and diverse range of other BBC series such as **The Onedin Line**, **Z Cars**, **Softly Softly** and **Dad's Army**.

DOCTOR WHO and The BAFTAS

Although **Doctor Who** has been ignored in the main BAFTA Television Award categories, the show's visual effects teams – Milk VFX, Real FX and BBC Wales VFX – have been nominated for a BAFTA Craft Award for their work on Series Eight. Other nominees for the award, which the team won last year for their work on anniversary episode **Day of the Doctor**, include **Atlantis** and **Ripper Street** and the winner will be announced at the BAFTA ceremony in East London on April 26th. Meanwhile Horror Channel won the 'Design – General Imagine Programme Design Package' award for their striking animations and logos for their run of classic **Doctor Who** repeats at the PromaxBDA Europe Awards 2015 held in Germany at the end of March.

New Twelfth Doctor Books on the Way

BBC Books have confirmed that three new hardback original fiction **Doctor Who** novels will be published in September to coincide with the commencement of the ninth television series. The books, the second batch to feature Peter Capaldi's Twelfth Doctor, are entitled **Royal Blood**, written by Una McCormack, **Big Bang Generation**, written by former **Doctor Who** script editor Gary Russell, and **Deep Time** written by Trevor Baxendale. In addition, Penguin Books will release three **Doctor Who**-related titles in September including the 2016 **Doctor Who** Annual, the ominously-titled **Time Lord Fairytales** and **The Dangerous Book of Monsters**. July will also see the release of the latest BBC 'prestige' hardback **Doctor Who** publication in a range not averse to chronicling new adventures of 'past' Doctors. This year's offering is entitled **The Drosten's Curse** and will be written by A.L. Kennedy and feature a new adventure for Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor. London-based Kennedy has twice been selected as one of Granta's 'Best of Young British Novelists' and won the 'Costa Book of the Year' award in 2007 for her novel **Day**.



DOCTOR WHO - The Walk

The popular 'walking tour' of various Cardiff locations used in the series since its revival in 2005 has been reinstated as part of the **Doctor Who** Experience at Cardiff Bay. Fans, families and visitors to Cardiff will have the opportunity to get closer to the show, as the walking tour takes in more than 40 filming locations for **Doctor Who**. The 75-minute tour will take fans into parts of Cardiff Bay which were used to double for different cities and planets from episodes across the last 10 years including those from the recent eighth series. The carefully-curated tour commenced over the Easter holiday and now runs every Friday, Saturday and Sunday until June 27th. The **Doctor Who** Experience itself has undergone yet another slight regeneration with the addition of several new props and costumes from Series Eight to join those already on display in the mezzanine display areas including the Skovox Blitzer from **The Caretaker**, The Half-Faced Man from **Deep Breath** and various items from **Listen** and **Robot of Sherwood**.

Riding John Nathan-Turner

In what must surely be one of the oddest accolades ever accorded to a **Doctor Who** alumnus, the classic series' final producer John Nathan-Turner, who presided over the show from 1980 until its 'cancellation' in 1989, has been commemorated by the naming of a bus in his memory by the City of Brighton and Hove. The...er... controversial producer lived in Brighton for many years, including the entire period of his time working on **Doctor Who** and his name is now apparently destined to take up residence on one of twenty-four new 'Coaster' buses deployed on Route 12 along the Sussex Heritage coast towards Eastbourne. And it wasn't even announced on April 1st.

DOCTOR WHO in Bits

A ten-story 'boxset' of specially-selected episodes from the 21st century incarnation of **Doctor Who** has been made legally available to fans across the BitTorrent content distribution service. For just over £8 (UK) or \$12 (USA) – and the service is available worldwide – fans can download twelve key episodes from the show's ten-year run as well as additional content which includes exclusive introductions to five episodes by current Doctor Peter Capaldi and the **Earth Conquest** documentary (available on the Series Eight DVD/Blu-ray boxset and recently transmitted in the UK on BBC Three) following Capaldi, co-star Jenna Coleman and showrunner Steven Moffat on their whistle-stop world tour to promote Series Eight. Episodes featured in the bundle include **Rose**, the episode which reintroduced TV audiences to the series in 2005, **The Empty Child** and **The Doctor Dances** (Moffat's first episodes for the series), **The Girl in the Fireplace**, **Blink**, **The End of Time** parts 1 and 2 (David Tennant's finale), **The Vampires of Venice**, **The Doctor's Wife** (by Neil Gaiman), **The Rings of Akhaten** (what???), **The Day of the Doctor** (the fiftieth anniversary special) and **Listen**.

Julie Kenyon, Director of Drama Brands at BBC Worldwide, said: "*The Time Lord continues to evolve and refresh and this innovative deal with BitTorrent allows us to directly reach a huge number of consumers and engage with fans on a global and fast-growing digital platform. Music content has seen tremendous success through BitTorrent Bundles and this deal is the first of its kind for British TV content*" BitTorrent are clearly excited by their new acquisition, as their Chief Content Officer Matt Mason explained: "*A series like this should be part of a versatile platform; one capable of reaching and engaging fans around the world. BitTorrent Bundle is that platform. It's fantastic that BBC Worldwide is the media organisation forward-thinking enough to make a release like this possible. This is an exciting way for fans to celebrate ten years of New Who and we are honoured to welcome the Doctor to BitTorrent.*"

WATCHING DOCTOR WHO

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK
AT THE WHONIVERSE
BY JR SOUTHALL



Here's a word that you won't see in the title of many episodes of modern *Doctor Who*: 'Part'. *The End of Time Part One* and *Part Two*, those are the only examples. And while some of the reason for that is because recent stories have included separate titles for the individual episodes (much as the *Doctor Who* of 1963 to 1966 did), it is also because, well, most modern *Doctor Who* stories take the form of entirely self-contained single episodes. That's just the way a lot of television is nowadays, and has been for quite some time. The sad thing is that it means *Doctor Who* has lost one of its most notable aspects, its cliffhangers.

The cliffhanger is something that has been associated with *Doctor Who* right from the very beginning. Reminiscent of the chapter plays of the 1930s and 1940s, quickies of the likes of *Flash Gordon* and *The Phantom*, the serial nature of *Doctor Who* was already at odds with much of the rest of television even by the 1960s. But the image of the TARDIS, which just moments

before had been parked in a junkyard on 20th Century Earth, standing in an ostensibly alien landscape as a mysterious shadow falls across its exterior, was reason enough (if a good enough reason hadn't already been provided) for the viewers of 1963 to want to find out what kind of a situation the two Coal Hill schoolteachers had got themselves into. Exactly four weeks later, with the ship marooned on an actual alien planet, and with the four regulars exploring a strange and apparently deserted metallic city, a fleeting glimpse of the series' first extraterrestrial life form was all it took to cement *Doctor Who* in the consciousness of a nation.

Since then there have been hundreds upon hundreds of episode-ending cliffhangers, which have tended to fall into two distinct categories: the impossible to escape situation, which nevertheless is always escaped from at the beginning of the following episode; and the perception altering reveal – a wonderful example

of which would be the sight of a giant hand plucking the TARDIS from its surroundings at the end of *Carnival of Monsters Part One*. They haven't all been entirely successful, of course (and there are some, such as the hastily chosen final moment of the under-running *Death to the Daleks Part Three*, that are downright dreadful), but generally speaking the most memorable moments of even the duller serials have been those that were left to linger in the audience's minds for another seven days immediately afterwards.

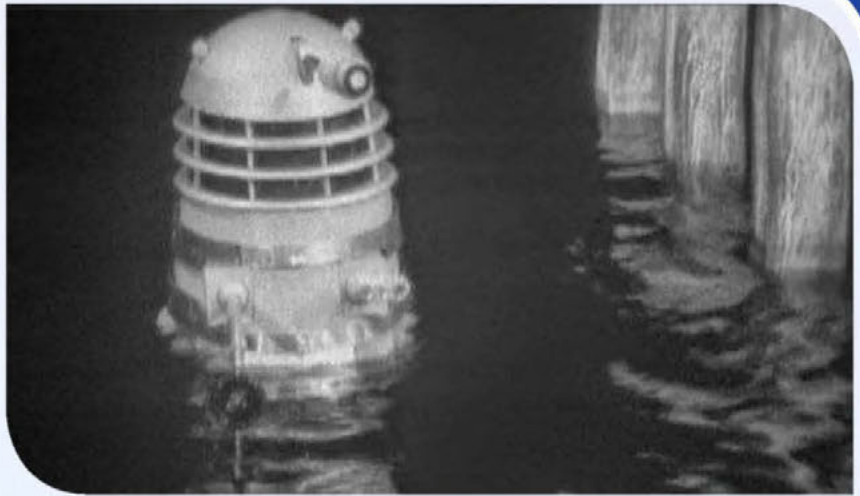
The reason the cliffhanger is such a potent element of serial storytelling is that it provides a reason for viewers to want to return the following week, in order to see how the characters escape from whatever perilous situation they've been left in – even if the audience aren't entirely engaged with the story thus far. And with stories being told in short instalments of roughly 25 minutes at a time, the chances are they'll stick around for the ensuing twenty minutes

or so until the next cliffhanger gives them a similar reason to return for the episode that follows the week after that. Occasionally the programme-makers would cheat, placing additional information in the reprise that would begin the subsequent instalment (*The Mark of the Rani* Part Two being a notorious instance), thereby removing the peril before the moment at which it reaches its peak, but by and large the makers of *Doctor Who* would try to avoid such obvious trickery as leaving the audience wondering how the Doctor would escape the cry of: "Kill them!" only to have the villain of the story begin the next episode with the line, "No, wait – I've changed my mind!"

Not that this didn't ever happen, I should add.

Some of the series' most fondly remembered episode endings have been those that weren't exactly unexpected; the appearance of the Daleks in a serial whose title ends of *the Daleks*, for example, in one of any number of odd manners – such as rising from the Thames or being picked out in multi-coloured paints. Others were those that presented something very familiar that was entirely unanticipated; the Sontarans revealed to be behind the Vardans' plan in *The Invasion of Time* Part Four, or a similar unveiling of the Cybermen in *Earthshock* Part One. It was very rare, once the individually-titled episodes of the early 1960s became a thing of the past, for there to be a cliffhanger between one serial and the next, though.

In the 1980s, executives at the BBC tried out a number of strategies designed to stop *Doctor Who* from passing its sell-by date, including rescheduling it on weekday evenings and, in 1985, revising the format from 25-minute instalments to 45-minute episodes more akin to the rest of television. The decision was taken in the series' own production office to continue with the storytelling more or less as it had been before, with the only concession to the new system being to conflate two episodes' worth of the old format into one of the new – thus retaining the famed cliffhanger structure of the series' success. In hindsight, this perhaps wasn't the wisest



decision; history (especially recent history) has demonstrated that while fans – who might be considered to be paying too close attention – will often equate length with substance, for more casual audiences, 45 minutes at a sitting is generally too long a period to devote to a story that isn't self-contained (the exception being the single-story serial drama, that is).

21st Century *Doctor Who* hasn't entirely left the serial cliffhanger behind; Russell T Davies' run included three two-part stories per year, and even Steven Moffat – who would seem to have hitherto preferred single episode stories – has written the occasional two-parter (and Series Nine, in something of a turnaround, is shaping up to be entirely made up of them). But while the loss of the regular weekly cliffhanger is undoubtedly sad (at least in the eyes of those who so fondly remember the classic series), the modern show has demonstrated how a story told in two 45-minute instalments isn't the easiest of formats to pull off. Very often the first half of such a story would be the equivalent of an old 25-minute episode stretched to breaking point, while the second half would involve cramming the entire rest of the story into a similar timeframe. All this in order to try

and replicate that Saturday morning movie serial nature of the old series, in which the cliffhanger would involve a creature reveal or similar such story juncture. The better two-parters of the modern era have been those that have eschewed such traditional undertakings and have made a virtue of the new format's different capabilities instead.

The original run of *Doctor Who* includes any number of stories that were ultimately resolved in a clumsy or unsatisfying manner, but that do not diminish in our memory – and this is perhaps where the modern series really loses out to its predecessor. Because a story like *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* would leave its audience waiting for more than a month to discover the ultimate reason behind the mysteries explored in its opening episode, and by doing so, allowed those mysteries plenty of time to settle into the viewing public's collective mind before botching the ending.

The early series of the modern production often tended to try and replicate the traditional three-act narrative structure of the original series with often only partial success, and although Steven Moffat has developed a new way of telling stories that have avoided some of the pitfalls of the Russell T Davies era, even the best of recent episodes have lacked that profound reliance on the situation itself to carry the audience along that stories such as *The Web of Fear*, *The Dæmons* and *Pyramids of Mars* included in abundance. There's no doubt that the shortage of cliffhangers is in part responsible for this, but in and of itself the cliffhanger ending is a disposable weapon in *Doctor Who*'s armoury. The series is a different beast now to the one that we enjoyed during the last century, and we experience it in a different way. And while it is a more sophisticated animal and one that can be just as rewarding (if not more so) as the original run ever was, there is undoubtedly something slightly unsatisfying about such unique adventures that conclude a mere 40 minutes after the premise has been introduced – and that don't allow the audience time enough to savour the situation before resolving it. So roll on Series Nine!

ARTWORK BY SIMON BRETT.



LIVVY BOOTE is...

THE GIRL FROM X PLANET X

People have been telling stories with pictures since the dawn of humanity, before words were even written down. And what we couldn't draw, we narrated to each other out loud, passing on legends of monsters, princes and princesses, tales of children who were kidnapped by wicked witches or lured by creepy men with candy bars. These are the stories we've all been brought up on, and they extend beyond the boundaries of time and culture.

So, when Disney came along and decided to put two and two together, it's not surprising that they hit the jackpot. Parents could take their children to the movies and feel that they were learning something important (like, God DAMMIT Snow White, why the hell would you just take a free apple from a stranger who looked like she'd crawled out of hell?) and kids could look at the pretty pictures and have fun watching Pinocchio's wild adventures (although I wouldn't know how, that movie is terrifying). It was revolutionary.

And then, what started off as a series of animated cautionary tales - don't be a deer in an open field; don't drink a strange barrel of liquid, it's probably not water and it could make you high as hell; don't piss off witches by not inviting them to your child's christening - slowly developed into something more. The characters began to go beyond your staple damsel in distress and handsome prince, they became more active within



Go Go Tomago from Big Hero 6: her catch phrase is "woman up". How cool is that?

the plot and began to show actual depth - the princesses like Eilonwy in *The Black Cauldron* were saving themselves, Belle was rescuing her kidnapped father and Jasmine was challenging the confining life of a princess.

Children were now being taught to not just be cautious, but to also be brave, to do what is right, and ask questions. They were beginning to see some kickass animated princesses - because as Princess Sofia, the popular Disney Junior character, said - anything can be a princess thing.

Lots of us will always cherish the older Disney movies, where the female characters spend the majority of the movie

asleep - but it's safe to say that they're pretty outdated now. Disney knows how to roll with the times, they knew that their audience had changed and that there were different lessons to teach. Where the old movies taught us not to trust strangers, *Frozen* also teaches us not to judge a book by its cover - but also don't get engaged to *someone you literally just met you pillock*. You may well have met him 'once upon a dream', but it doesn't make a difference. You still technically *just* met him, so you probably *don't* love him.

Disney has almost always had plenty of female leads, but nowadays they're actually *leading* the movie- they take control of their own fate and save the day, along with a little help, which is great. Children now have good female role models in Disney - women like Mulan who challenge gender roles and fight for their country, female scientists like Jane who explore beyond the boundaries of their knowledge, women like Esmeralda who take a stand for justice, young teenage girls like Ariel who want to see the world and escape their fathers' suffocating protectiveness. Disney was finally beginning to show what *real* women could do.

And what's also cool is that their movies don't always have a romantic plot anymore. *Brave* took that stereotype and shoved it quite happily in everyone's faces. *Lilo and Stitch* didn't need a romantic plot, either - in fact, rather like *Frozen*, it teaches the strength of sisterly love, and even better, it brought some racial diversity to the screens.

And then DreamWorks came along. *Shrek* made such a massive hit, that even now everyone I know who's even close to my age can't listen to 'All Star'



When the other children told her that horse racing was for princes, Princess Sofia thought, stuff that.

ANIMATED MOVIES HAVE MADE GREAT PROGRESS OVER THE YEARS - AND IN MORE WAYS THAN JUST HOW THEY LOOK...

or 'Changes' without thinking of that loveable green ogre, Princess Fiona, and that donkey who had babies with a dragon. *Shrek* took what Disney had started to do - to exaggerate and idealise classic fairy tales and myths - and pushed it that one stage further, parodying the stories to the extent that the humour and romance we had grown to love in Disney seemed a little... ridiculous. It made us see the silliness in Disney.

With this foundation, DreamWorks had the opportunity to bring us classics like *How to Train Your Dragon* and *Kung Fu Panda*. And now, it's giving us *Home*, the story of a teenage girl's adventures with the bizarre alien Oh - with a minority lead character and lack of romantic plot, it's something worth being excited about, and it looks like a lot of fun too.

But it's easy to forget with DreamWorks' success that they're actually quite far behind; Disney has been portraying diverse female lead characters for decades, now. Their movies might be a bit silly, but they've always made the first moves when it comes to breaking the boundaries. *Mulan*, *Kida*, *Esmeralda*, *Lilo* and *Nani*, *Tiana* - they all came first.

That's not to say that *Tip* from *Home* won't be awesome, and that the movie shouldn't be celebrated - absolutely not. It's just that, coming from a generation of people who were brought up on Disney movies with diverse female characters,



If you're a beautiful, successful woman, a goddess, or a princess, or you're going to fall in love with someone who is definitely not good enough for you. Sorry.

I think it's important to remember that without Disney, movies like *Home* probably wouldn't have the characters it has. So, whilst Disney might be really silly and DreamWorks have always been a bit more self-aware, Disney has pushed animation to the point it's at now - to the point where we can have minority characters in lead roles.

That being said, Disney's female characters have problems, of course they do - as a franchise, it hasn't entirely escaped the effect of a patriarchal society. Often, beautiful, talented female characters end up with guys who aren't quite on their level - because apparently women can see beyond aesthetic and class, but men can't. Quite often it's the case in movies that when a girl goes for a guy who isn't necessarily in her league, it's only fair, but if a guy goes for a girl who isn't as beautiful as he is handsome, it's a joke.

And, let's face it, there isn't very much variation in their animation - or, at least, they're not as diverse as the male characters.

But even with its faults, Disney has always forged the path for other animated movies to follow, like *Anastasia*, *The Swan Princess*, or *The Road to El Dorado*. Disney has always been the first to bring something new and fresh to the screens, has always known what the audience

are looking for. With *Frozen*, it brought us sisterly love smashing cheating, evil boyfriends in the face; with *Brave*, it brought us independent Scottish women turning into bears; with *Moana*, it'll bring us some awesome racial diversity and more female character kick-ass action.

So, what's next?

Disney has been ground-breaking since its inception. What else can it bring us? Well, *Frozen* already got so much backlash for promoting the lesbian agenda (to be honest, as someone who's more than happy to watch TV and movies through queer glasses, even I struggle with how they came to that conclusion) that they can't lose much by bringing an actual, canon LGBT+ couple on screen, as *daring* as it is. The Nickelodeon cartoon *The Legend of Korra* has done it, with relatively little trouble. Your move, Disney.

There are plenty of things they could do - they could tackle transgender issues, they could bring in disabled main characters... Every month, I write about how there isn't enough representation for these areas of society, and it would be great to see Disney, the mother of all movie franchises, change that. And one day, I think they will.

But till then, I'm excited to see some more awesome female lead action. Bring it on, Disney!



Three female main characters vs three male main characters: the male characters seem to have more variation.

HORRIFY ME

(OR HOW STARBURST STOPPED LIVING & BECAME A ZOMBIE FOR THE DAY!)

by JD Gillam



Most horror fans are always on the lookout for a new genre experience. Horror movies just aren't scary enough anymore. Games are becoming repetitive and too reliant on QTE sequences. And it appears that less people are reading these days – shame on you! So the question is – where can horror fans get their kicks?

Well, we may have just found the answer in a farm workshop in Kent.

Invited to pop along and see what he can do, we drove down to the workspace of **Horrrify Me**, run by Rick Jones. The first thing that struck us was the ironic fact that we turned off the road onto a wide open area that had an eerie guise of abandonment, greeted by two snarling hounds from hell (ok, terriers then). Yup, there's nothing like driving into a farm to get yourself psyched up to be zombified!

We knocked gingerly on the door to be met by Rick, who isn't actually that scary at all. In fact, he's a pretty nice chap. Rick runs his own design company from the same building and only started **Horrrify Me** recently as he spotted a gap in the market.

We were made to feel welcome and had a chat about the company and Rick's plans, then got very geeky when we spotted his life-size replica of R2-D2 which, amazingly, Rick had made himself from scratch using such tools as an IKEA lampshade! Then, it was down to business. It's at this point that we should tell you that **Horrrify Me** doesn't just turn people into zombies, oh no. The talented Mr Jones can pretty much turn you into your worst nightmare if you're prepared to cover yourself in as much gore and prosthetics as you've seen in a horror film. You can become a vampire or a demon; you can have a deluxe shoot or even turn up in your own outfits and have Rick put his own little spin on your cosplay ideas. He'll even mock up a poster of your favourite horror film and make you the star. Now that's art that you can talk about the next time you hold a party!

First of all, Rick tells us that the clothes we are wearing will be pretty much useless to us after the shoot, as he'll be covering them in so much grue and gore that the only place they'll be fit for is the bin. With that taken under advisement, we crack on.

Rick sits us down and adds some silicone prosthetics to our face that he's just mixed up in front of us, creating fake gouges in our skin. Then he adds professional face paints and darkens our eyes to give us that sunken socket look. Next comes the mud. Real mud; *really cold*, real mud. This goes everywhere and, being mid-January, it's fair to say it doesn't warm us up. This is no beauty treatment, that's for sure.

Once the mud has been liberally applied over skin, hair and clothing, he brings out the blood. It's golden syrup with red dye, but it looks spot on. Gloopy and thick, we're just pleased that Rick doesn't use a paint brush to slather it on. It goes everywhere and when Rick finishes with the make up after about 45 minutes, we look in the mirror and see our undead self staring back at us. Now, Rick is happy for you to bring your own coloured contact lenses if you want, but he prefers to use digital after-

effects to change the colour of your eyes into the milky white irises of the living dead.

We start to take some shots, posing as a zombie with an appetite would. We crawl on the floor, stumble towards the camera and at Rick's request, we shove a mouthful or two of the fake blood into our mouth and let it drool back out. It tastes as sickly sweet as you'd expect, but it has a wonderful effect in the pictures.

Between sessions, we run on the spot and do star jumps to keep warm, but the atmosphere is great. Just because you look like a zombie, doesn't mean you can't have fun! This is one of Rick's strengths. He knows when you need to be in character and what makes a good shot that he can work with, but he also ensures that you are having a good time.

We then venture outside for some day shots. Around some of the farm buildings there are some great places for zombie scenes, and Rick takes full advantage of these. A local farmer drives past and has a brief glance, but batters ne'er an eyelid in our direction – we guess he's seen it all before.

Rick doesn't have a huge array of props, although he is more than happy for guests to bring their own. He does have fake knives, a hockey mask, a chainsaw and a few other bits and pieces but Rick loves it when a guest shows up with something out of left field. Recently, the studio has been host to a real pig's head, a Stormtrooper outfit, animal hearts, real swords and even acrobatic hoops. If there's one thing that Rick enjoys, it's a challenge!

To boil it all down, the shoots on offer provide an amazing experience and it appears that guests love getting involved. Rick recently even had some pretty major horror icons take part in a shoot together – Freddy Krueger, Michael Myers and Carrie. Where else can you get that kind of variety in a single photo-shoot? He also has a fake ribcage on site so that you can take part in a rotten gore creature photo-shoot; although Rick does warn that there is a certain level of commitment to that type of shoot in that you will be covered from head to toe in fake blood and gore. It's definitely not for the squeamish!

If you're unsure about the quality of the



photo-shoot, then go to the website (horrify.me.uk) and have a poke around. We can confirm that the photos are finished to an incredibly high standard and the makeovers look even more extreme once Rick has finished his digital after-effects work.

These aren't your usual Halloween dress up pictures, but more of a professional, almost Hollywood quality package that you'll love. Some guests even flew all the way over from Holland for their own vampire shoot, because there really isn't any other experience like this in the UK.

Once we finished the photo-shoot and managed to get ourselves cleaned up, we sat down and had a chat with Rick.

STARBURST: How long has Horrify Me been going for?

Rick Jones: Horrify Me technically started in November 2013, but took a while to grow and develop into what it now is.

What is the business mantra of Horrify Me?

I try to offer a very wide range of horror shoots, some of it blended with breathtaking beauty, and some of it stomach-churningly gross. Whether you love it or hate it, horror is an incredibly creative and artistic genre, full of rich ideas and themes which we try and explore with our clients.

Where did you get the idea from?

I've always loved horror films since I was a kid (I have such a cool mum, she used

to let me stay up late for the BBC2 horror doubles in the 1970s). I've also always worked in creative fields after studying fine art and design many moons ago. I'd never considered putting my love of horror and my profession together until Lisa Richardson contacted me to create her new cover for her novel *Blog of the Dead*. The design and resulting photo shoot for this job just gave me a 'light bulb-above-the-head' moment, and before I knew it, I was photographing horror almost every week. I was sort of 'ready-made' for this work as it lets me exploit two areas that I have a very formidable expertise in – horror and creative design.

What is the weirdest request you've had to date?

That's easy! A gorgeous naked lady covered head-to-toe in blood with a real pig's head from her local butcher. After that, not much seems weird any more.

What would you balk at doing?

I would never do anything sexually pornographic, or that depicted children being murdered or abused. Kids look great as zombies and actually look quite creepy. But there's a lot of lines I won't cross when it comes to shooting nudity or youngsters. I do go all-out to shock sometimes but I also operate under a very strong ethical policy when it comes to these things.



What is the worst feedback you've received to date?

So far, I am very proud of our 100% 'hit rate' with models and clients - nothing but awesome feedback from them! However, I regularly get less-friendly feedback from people who dislike the topic of my shoots. I've been told my work is 'not right or proper' and 'it should be banned' and 'it's people like you that desensitise children to real world horror'. I guess the most horrible thing someone said of my work was when it was compared to ISIS - 'images of death and horror being deliberately fed into public media designed to generate shock and fear'. And there was me thinking it was just a bit of fun for horror movie fans! When you work in the horror trade, sometimes you need a thick skin. I've grown used to this type of complaint now, but it won't stop me and my 10k+ fans on Facebook tend to stick up for the work too, which is always really nice. I love horror fans!

What are your thoughts on censorship?

With regards to horror movies and entertainment, I just hate it! I still have lingering memories of the 1980's video nasty era and what a complete farce it all was. These days we're seeing 'unofficial' censorship being attempted in strange ways. For example, I support the Glastonbury and Folkestone Zombie Walks as well as other similar horror events and I see first-hand the ridiculous attempts by local church groups to get the walks banned. I've heard every excuse you can imagine in support of the ban: zombies offend the memory of our

fallen soldiers, they depict depression and gore, they promote torture and death, they scare children (actually the children love the carnival atmosphere and enjoy the creativity, theatricality, and fun of the zombie walks). People get offended easily these days and a lot of them believe that gives them the right to impose some level of censorship against the things they dislike.

If you could choose three people for your dream shoot, who would they be?

Oh that's easy! Emily Booth (my favourite scream queen), Simon Pegg, and George A. Romero, the master himself! If any of you guys are ever in my area... I have just had confirmation that a couple of *Shaun of the Dead* actors have agreed to be in a zombie shoot later this year but I can't say who yet. Watch this space...

You have an upcoming team-up with Bunker 51, how is that going to work?

Apocalypse Events (the company that runs Bunker 51) have offered **Horrrify Me** their fantastic venue to use as a shooting studio at certain times. It means we can access a (hopefully) wider audience for the shoots. They have also launched **Zomb-Me-Up**, a sort of zombie academy experience, which lets people really learn some amazing zombie crafts in terms of clothing, makeup, special FX, acting, and so on. **Horrrify Me** is very involved in this too, providing incredible shoots of the zombies. It's a very new idea that they've been developing for a long time and it all looks incredible. I am *dead* excited about it!



HORRIFY ME! COMPETITION

Now you've read about our experience, hopefully as a horror fan, you'll want to experience it too. And here's your chance...

STARBURST and HORRIFY ME are giving away a chance for one lucky reader to experience a free horror shoot as zombies or vampires for 2 people (18 and over only). This will include a set of 4 prints. The shoot will be at the Kent based HORRIFY ME workshop and travel and accommodation is not included in the prize. See terms and conditions below for more details.

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer the following fiendishly difficult question:

Who directed SHAUN OF THE DEAD?

Send all entries - marked "Horrrify Me Comp" to comp@starburstmagazine.com before May 15th, when the winner will be drawn. Their details will then be given to Rick at HORRIFY ME in order to arrange the shoot.

To see more examples of the gory work done by Rick and for further information, head over to the website, www.horrify.me.uk, and tell them we sent you!

HORRIFY ME and STARBURST do not accept any responsibility for late or lost entries due to the Internet or email problems. Proof of sending is not proof of receipt. Entrants must supply full details as required on the competition page, and comply with all rules to be eligible for the prizes. No responsibility is accepted for ineligible entries or entries made fraudulently. Unless otherwise stated, the Competition is not open to employees of: (a) the Company; and (b) any third party appointed by the Company to organise and/or manage the Competition; and (c) the Competition sponsor(s). This competition is a game promoted STARBURST. STARBURST's decision is final in every situation and no correspondence will be entered into. STARBURST reserves the right to cancel the competition at any stage, if deemed necessary in its opinion, and if circumstances arise outside of its control. Entrants must be UK residents and 18 or over. Entrants will be deemed to have accepted these rules and to agree to be bound by them when entering this competition. The winners will be drawn at random from all the correct entries, and only they will be contacted personally. Prize must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred. There will be no cash alternatives. STARBURST routinely adds the email addresses of competition entrants to the regular newsletter, in order to keep entrants informed of upcoming competition opportunities. Details of how to unsubscribe are contained within each newsletter. All information held by STARBURST will not be disclosed to any third parties.





by Andrew Pollard

Adam Green

ADAM GREEN has been making quite the name for himself on the horror scene. As well as the **HATCHET** franchise, Green has done wonders with the likes of **FROZEN**, **SPIRAL**, and his work in **CHILLERAMA**, plus his successful **HOLLISTON TV** series. **INDEPENDENTS DAY** found out all about them as well as his latest film, **DIGGING UP THE MARROW...**



STARBURST: You seem to have got to the point in your career where you have developed the reputation of a great talent in the horror genre; a genre that can often be full of fodder and some horrendously bad films. How have you tried to make yourself stand out in a genre that is often so crammed?

It depends who you ask! In this genre, and the same thing with sci-fi, people are very particular. Looking at *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, I like both of them but I'm much more *Star Wars* than *Star Trek*. With horror fans, too, somebody might like slasher movies but they don't like ghost movies. You don't know. I think because I keep doing so many different things in the genre that helps. I think the reason why this genre has so much garbage is because usually these movies do not get the budgets that they should have, so you gotta be really creative to make them work, and that comes down to the writing more than anything. Some people focus too much on the gags or the effects, but if you don't have a story, and it doesn't need to be super elaborate, I mean *Hatchet* is a campfire tale, that's as simple as it comes. Everyone likes to compare that movie to *Friday the 13th*, and I don't know if it's just because there's trees and Kane Hodder in it, but tonally that movie was inspired by *Fright Night* and *An American Werewolf in London*, not *Friday the 13th*. I love *Friday the 13th*, I love *A Nightmare on Elm Street*... but *Halloween* is, like, the one. But there's a lot of crap, and I think a lot of people think that horror is a good way to get started in making a film, and they don't really like it. I don't think the studios get horror, they look down on it. We're like one step above porn. Like, they'll do it if it'll make money. They love remakes because that's a guaranteed thing, but that's the fans' fault. The fans go to fucking see it! If you stop going, they'll stop making it. They only want your money. They'll make holocaust comedies and cartoons about Hitler if you pay to see it – they have no moral compass whatsoever. If you pay for it, they'll make it. If you look at the history of time, the best horror movies, *The Exorcist* aside – that was a studio film based on a bestseller and how that ever happened I'll never know, *The Shining* is the same thing – but you look at John Carpenter's *Halloween*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*,



HATCHET

Blair Witch Project, *Paranormal Activity*, *Evil Dead*... all independent movies. Those have always been my heroes, and those movies were not well liked when they came out. *Halloween* had one good review in the entire country, in the Village Voice, everybody else hated it. Now it's in the AFI's Top 100. So you've gotta give things 20 years. When *Hatchet* came out, there were so many critics who were quick to say we have a new icon. What if there hadn't have been any sequels? You don't know that yet. Now 10 years later, it's a franchise. You go to conventions and people have Victor Crowley tattooed on them or they're cosplaying as him, now I'm a little bit more comfortable with that accolade. But I still think that we need to wait 10 more years and see because a movie like a *Prom Night* remake will come out and make, like, \$50 million at the box office and everyone's like, "Yay", then a day later nobody will remember that movie. *The Evil Dead* did no business when it came out, the original, and now look at it, it's like a seminal film. It's hard, but I think you've gotta love it if you're gonna do it. Fans can see right through you if you're trying to cash in. They know that you love it. And I don't think *Hatchet* is really such a great movie. I think there's some really awesome effects in it and some good jokes, but the spirit of it is what people responded to.

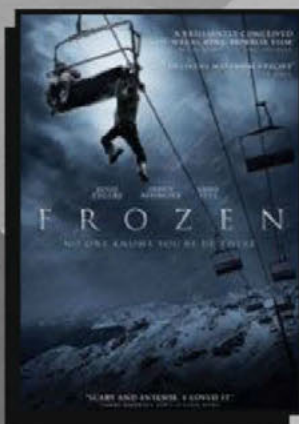
With Victor Crowley, I think it's the case of horror fans wanting somebody to grab

on to and root for, much like how things were with Michael Myers, Jason Voorhees, Freddy Krueger, Pinhead, etc.

What I found incredibly interesting, though, about the journey of Victor Crowley are those three films. I only want *Hatchet* to be those three films, I never wanted it to go further than that. Because they've been successful, every day there's pressure for a fourth. I'm not opposed to it, I probably won't have anything to do with it because I spent a decade of my life on those and have other things to do now. I do still love it, and if it was the right filmmaker with the script and it was going to be handled with care... The thing with *Hatchet* is that those three movies were made with the same crew. That doesn't happen, and that's what went wrong with the '80s slashers where they became a cash grab; one made money so let's make another one. But as a character, where Victor Crowley threw people, when we started making the sequel, and again I have to stress that I already knew what the sequel was, most of the crew knew what it was, and we knew what the third one was when we made the first one, there are weapons that you see in the first movie that are now used in the second and third movies. We were already setting it up. I said to the crew, the day that we started shooting *Hatchet II*, "*When this movie comes out, it's going to be the worst movie ever, it's going to be awful compared to the first one. That's what happens with sequels. Everybody thinks that they want the first movie again, and*

nothing's going to be that so they don't like the sequel. But I know that this is better than that, and I know that you guys know that it's better than the first one, it's got so much more going for it. But it's going to take five years before people start saying that. So just know that and make every decision that you make on-set with the fans in mind, don't think about anything else." And sure enough, where it threw people is that Victor Crowley's a ghost. In the first movie they mention that, but it's not really explained, like Marybeth only knows so much. Then in the second one, when Zombie explains all of it and you understand he's a repeater, that no matter what you do to him he's going to come back the next night in the same shape that he was in. That really threw people because now there's actually an explanation as to why he doesn't die, why you can't kill him... you light him on fire, you shoot his head off, he's still going to keep coming back. They didn't do that with the other guys, they just *did* somehow. I think that kind of made people go, "*What? Now there's rules and they make sense?*" People weren't expecting them. But he's also a sympathetic character as well. I don't know how many conventions I've done where people who've been horribly burned or deformed have come to see me. I don't even know how you can describe that. So when someone wants to give it a bad review or hate on it, it's like, "*If you only knew. You can't touch me, you'll never take that away.*"

FROZEN



CHILLERAMA

It's a very special thing. So I don't want, if there's a *Hatchet IV*, I don't want it to suck, I don't want to let those fans down. I'd rather it stay at three. We made those films as best as we could. You'd think, with how successful that first one was, that we would've had more money for the other ones. And the movies got bigger and bigger, more deaths, bigger casts, bigger names, and the budgets just kept getting halved and halved and halved. By the third one, we were all working for free and just for the love of it, nobody was getting paid shit on those, but we loved it. That's why I think those movies matter to a lot of people and will hopefully stand the test of time. I am happy to see, though, that the 2000s are over. I mean, in some ways I should thank the 2000s because that's how *Hatchet* got made; that was my answer to what was happening. As a fan, I was so offended by the mean spiritedness of horror that it had become all about torture and how disgusting you could be. I don't wanna watch a woman get raped. I don't wanna see somebody just beg for their life for no other reason than someone's torturing them. That's not fun, that's not why I got into this. I was just remembering what it was like when I grew up, so I made what I remembered in my way. And Hollywood didn't like it. They liked the writing but they wouldn't make the money. Then when it was done, nobody wanted it. So I just kept doing festivals and festivals, and it's winning awards and the fans are talking. The fans gave that movie life.

Then the studios were like, "Oh, this could be a franchise." But they didn't like it, they still don't. Still to this day, I could be up for a job, and it's because of *Frozen* or *Holliston* or whatever. Then when they realise that I'm the guy who did *Hatchet*, they're like, "Oh, the *Hatchet* guy? Oh, no, no, no, no!" That movie was not supposed to become what it was. Hollywood did not believe in that movie. When Hollywood doesn't believe in something, that's it. Then when it still does it without them, there can be a little bit of, not backlash, but I can tell by certain execs when I meet with them, they're like, "Congratulations with that. I never got it." So then I just wanna say, "Thanks. I think you're fucking fat. What do you think about that?!"

Sadly, despite having appeared on TV [on Horror Channel] over here, *Chillerama* still isn't available on Blu-ray or DVD in the UK yet.

That's because no one wants it in the UK. They won't touch it. It keeps growing, though, and it's getting so popular now that it's probably not that much longer before the UK finally realises... because it was super successful here and in Germany. I thought the Germans were gonna take out *Anne Frankenstein* [The *Diary of Anne Frankenstein* is the segment of *Chillerama* that Green wrote and directed]. Joe [Lynch – writer/director of the *Zom-B-Movie* segment of the film] and I went to Stuttgart and Munich with the film, and Joe was like "You understand, you might get killed

here." I just said, "I don't think so. I'm making fun of Hitler. I'm not making fun of Anne Frank, I'm making fun of Hitler. It's 20 minutes making Hitler look like an idiot, so who's gonna stand up for that?" And the only person who was angry was this Neo-Nazi who said, "You make the Führer look like a clown," and I'm like, "Your Führer killed half my fucking family!" It's equal now.

Where did the whole concept for *Digging Up the Marrow* come from?

In 2010, we had just gotten back from Sundance where *Frozen* premiered and as much as that movie was so well received and the reviews were amazing, we were incredibly depressed. We should've come back cheering and triumphant. It's always the business stuff that's the heartbreaking shit. The producers of that film had a deal with a company called Overture, and they were all expecting Overture to put that film out properly on 1,500 screens and with marketing. As much as every one of our films have had a theatrical release, we've still never gotten that big push with TV commercials and billboards, where people actually know it's out! That never happens. Because Overture went out of business right as we finished *Frozen*, we couldn't get it back. So we couldn't go to Sundance as a free agent. Even though all of these studios were asking about it and asking if they could buy it, Anchor Bay was already putting it out. Look, I

HOLLISTON



wouldn't have a career if it wasn't for Anchor Bay. But *Frozen* opened on 100 screens, there was no marketing, nobody knew it was there, and of course it ended up becoming a huge hit; it actually dethroned *Hatchet* as their biggest genre hit of all time. In other places in the world, it was put out properly, it was advertised, and it did great. But we were pretty bummed out, and we were sitting here in the office. We were looking at the posters to all of the movies on our wall. The very first thing that Will and I had ever made, back when we were making cable commercials, was a movie called *Coffee & Donuts*. It was just something where we wanted to see if we could make a movie. We only had \$400 and we stole the equipment from the cable company, we would shoot all night with it and bring it back in the morning. It took 6 months to shoot, we didn't have a real crew or real actors, but it was ours and we owned it and we could do what we wanted. Now we fucked that all up because there's copyright infringement every second, every frame of the movie, because we didn't know what we were doing. Ultimately, 13 years later, that became *Holliston*. We were saying, "How do we do that again?" We were looking

to do something, not necessarily cheap, but something where we don't have to enter any type of deals where somebody has the rights to the film before we even make it, where we don't have to answer to outside producers, something totally off the wall and creative.

I was doing a signing at a Fangoria convention and this guy comes through my line and just hands me this pamphlet called *Digging Up the Marrow*. He didn't want an autograph or picture or anything, he just said "I wanted to give you this to say thank you for all of your inspiration." He walked away, but that night when I was reading it and looking at the artwork, I was like "Holy fuck! That was Alex Pardee!" I knew his artwork but I didn't know what he looked like, and he didn't say who he was. So I'm reading it, and whenever he does an art exhibit – *Digging Up the Marrow* was in 2009 – it's not just art hung in a gallery, what he does is there's always a story behind it and it's this immersive experience, which is one of my favourite things about how his mind works. For *Digging Up the Marrow*, the story was a former Boston police detective called William Dekker claims he had found monsters and had contacted Alex and commissioned him to paint them. So I'm reading that and I'm looking at the

monsters, and I'm thinking of the package that I'd got, and I thought what if William Dekker had contacted a cult filmmaker and he's trying to get somebody to prove this and tell the story. I'm small-time enough where I'd go for that, I'd do it. Then we could use ourselves and warp reality and fantasy in this weird way, and then if the monsters could look like Alex's artwork... So I started calling and texting everybody at 3 in the morning. Alex flew down from San Francisco, we talked about the idea that we were already kicking around and what he had down, and it just kind of went from there. I think what was most exciting was blending the art of cinema and the art of art, to make a movie that was inspired by an art exhibit and to bring it to life and make it as grounded and as real as possible. You don't usually see that with monster movies, but we didn't want to make a found footage movie or necessarily a mockumentary. With a mockumentary, everyone would have been playing a character. Because so much of it is real, you can't really even call it that. I don't know what you call it, but that's been fun.

ADAM GREEN's latest movie, *DIGGING UP THE MARROW* is out in the UK on June 15th.

DIGGING UP THE MARROW



REVIEW:

DIGGING UP THE MARROW

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: ADAM GREEN / STARRING: RAY WISE, ADAM GREEN, WILL BARRATT, RILEAH VANDERBILT, KANE HODDER / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 15TH

Digging Up the Marrow is a film that is unlike nearly anything else you've seen; likely best pinned down by the tag 'faux documentary', but don't let that fool you into thinking this is some sort of mockumentary or found footage effort.

Writer/director Adam Green, best known for the likes of *Frozen* (the one without the headache-inducing songs) and the *Hatchet* franchise, delivers a feature here that sees him and real-life cohort Will Barratt set out to make a film based on a claim by the slightly odd William Dekker (Wise) that there really are monsters out there. As such, Green and Barratt meet with Dekker and document the whole proceedings as they look to find out whether this potential loon is actually talking the truth about the monsters that supposedly live underground in Dekker's local cemetery. If nothing else, they think that they may at least get an entertaining tale out of the whole thing if it all proves to be bogus.

What makes *Digging Up the Marrow* unique is that it at times feels very real, with Green and Barratt played as the very real horror filmmakers that they are plus plenty of real interviews and appearances from the likes of Tom Holland, Kane Hodder, Don Coscarelli, and the sadly now deceased Dave Brockie (from masked rockers GWAR). Also making an appearance is artist Alex Pardee, whose dark and twisted artwork was highly inspirational in making *Digging Up the Marrow*.

Despite coming across as very real throughout, there's been no PR push to claim that this is some sort of found footage-type feature and that the content here is stuff that honestly, honestly, really, really happened. At the end of the day, what we get is an enjoyable film that works on a multitude of levels as it blends the lines of reality and fiction whilst taking the viewer on a journey that has elements of both humour and horror at times. Further blurring the lines is the inclusion of genre fave Ray Wise as the character of Dekker, who is thrown into the action amongst all of these 'real' characters.

Make no mistake about it, *Digging Up the Marrow* is very much a movie, telling an investigative story based around purported monsters as explored by some intrigued filmmakers. The chemistry on show between the key trio of Green, Barratt and Wise is spot on and delivered with a natural charm, as you'd expect for such a film, and the cameos from various horror alumni will bring a smile to the face of long-time fans of the genre.

The premise alone could've made this film come off as hokey and unsure of what it's trying to be, yet Adam Green and his team make it work wonderfully, with plenty to enjoy for loyal horror hounds.



LIVING LIFE A QUARTER MILE AT A TIME

A FAST & FURIOUS RETROSPECTIVE

by JD Gillam

With the release of the latest instalment of the fast-paced, full throttle FAST AND FURIOUS series, we look back at the most surprising success story...



Dominic Toretto with Brian O'Conner in THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS, 2001

Back in 2001, producer Neal H. Moritz – who, at the time, was better known for having his finger in the pies of the new wave of teen slasher flicks such as *I Know What You Did Last Summer* and *Urban Legend* – came aboard to produce what would become the first in a series of films to try and fill in a hitherto unknown gap in the market for decent sized budget movies for petrol heads.

The Fast and the Furious cruised by, engines revving, fists flying and underside LED lights beaming with a group of quite fresh-faced acting talents bringing us a new slant on an age-old undercover cop story – the similarities with *Point Break* are obvious and it owes a certain debt to the Charlie Sheen starring *No Man's Land*.

Fifteen years later, who could have predicted what a behemoth the series would become? At last count, the first six films had brought in over \$2billion at the box office, making it Universal Pictures' most successful franchise ever. But we are getting slightly ahead of ourselves here. Let's go back to the beginning and see where it all began.

The idea for the original film was kindled from a magazine article called *Racer X* by Ken Li, which appeared in the May 1998 issue of *Vibe* magazine. The article tells the story of Rafael Estevez from Washington Heights, who transitions into drag racing as well as highlighting the market for Japanese

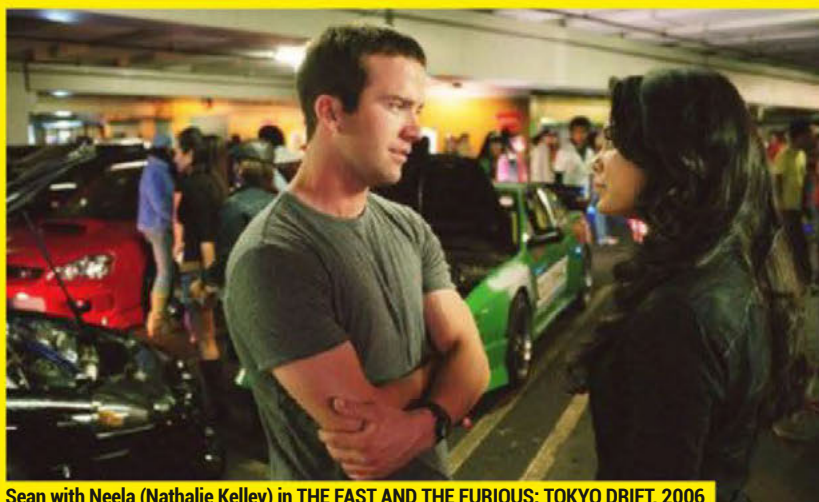
import car customisation. As a result of the printed article and after attending a race, director Rob Cohen convinced Universal to purchase the rights off Li and make the film. The rest, as they say, is history.

In the original film, Los Angeles cop Brian O'Conner (Paul Walker) is tasked with going undercover to infiltrate the illegal street racing gangs and figure out who is behind a spate of truck hijackings. Working at a car parts shop, he gets to know the main players and earn the trust of Dominic Toretto (Vin Diesel), managing to integrate himself into the racer's life. Brian's investigation leads him to suspect two eventual red herrings in the form of a guy named Hector – whose crew just so happens to drive a trio of Honda Civics, which are the same make of cars used in the hijackings – and Toretto's arch nemesis, Johnny Tran. Unfortunately, Brian's detective skills are apparently blindsided by his infatuation with Toretto's sister, Mia.

Eventually, after a hijacking gone awry, Brian is forced to drop his cover. Tran then guns down one of Toretto's crew and is then killed by Brian in the ensuing chase. The mutual respect that the two characters have built up is solidified in the final act when a final race between Brian and Dom ends with Toretto crashing his car and Brian giving him his to escape the net being cast by the police, systematically throwing away his career in the process.

In fairness, the original film is not the greatest, but there's something about it that audiences warmed to, which lead to the inevitable sequel.

2 Fast 2 Furious arrived in 2003, sans Diesel, which ironically led to a more colourful and action-packed film. Preluded by a short titled *Turbo Charged*, which presented Brian's journey across America to Miami, we find the disgraced former cop now racing for money. But his past catches up with him when the FBI offers him an opportunity that



Sean with Neela (Nathalie Kelley) in *THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS: TOKYO DRIFT*, 2006

he struggles to refuse.

Roping in an old friend, Roman Pearce (Tyrese Gibson), the pair are offered an opportunity to have their records expunged in return for assisting in the apprehension of drug lord Carter Verone (Cole Hauser). They've even got a little inside help from an undercover agent in the form of Monica Fuentes (Eva Mendes). Verone hires them to ensure that a shipment of his money is delivered to him for transport. It's all a double cross, of course, and it's up to Brian and Roman to ensure that Fuentes survives, and Verone faces justice.

Even more so than in the first film, the cars are the stars here. The gleaming Miami sunshine and vistas are a perfect companion for the super-fast vehicles on show – especially when the NOS (nitrous oxide) is utilised – and the main story is only really there as filler. The light tone, however, does clash with that of the first film, and it is no surprise the third film had none of the original principals signed up when it began filming.

With Diesel trying to forge his own

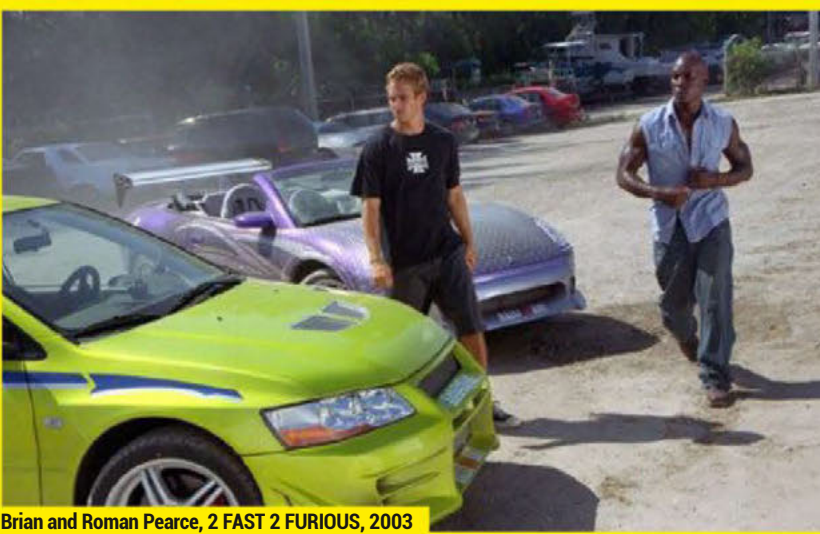
franchises with *xXx* and *Riddick* and Walker trying his hand at meatier roles, it was left for a predominantly unknown Lucas Black to pick up the pieces as the action moved to the Far East in *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*. If the storylines so far had seemed a little one dimensional, then the trilogy caper took the biscuit.

Forced to live with his father in Tokyo to avoid being arrested in America, Sean Boswell (Black), falls in with the local street racing gangs and immediately rubs local Yakuza wannabe D.K. (short for Drift King) up the wrong way. How, you ask? Well, it's all about a girl. Yup, the series just went all *Dawson's Creek* on us! Another local, Han (Sung Kang), takes a liking to Sean and proceeds to teach him how to drift, beat D.K. and win the girl. Yay! But in the process, Han is killed when his car explodes after an accident while trying to escape D.K., who is trying to kill him. A bit of 'Master and Apprentice' going on here. Just before the credits, however, there's a sting. Sean is challenged to a race by an old friend of Han's. It's Toretto.

Fast forward to 2009, three years after *Tokyo Drift*, and Diesel and Walker both appear to have realised that their careers outside of the franchise aren't what they thought they'd be. It seems the gang was getting back together for *Fast & Furious*.

Again, a prelude was filmed – *Los Bandoleros* – which showcases Toretto and his girlfriend, Letty (Michelle Rodriguez) getting back together. The main movie action kicks off with another truck hijacking. The target this time is a tanker or four of fuel. Barely escaping with their lives, Toretto and his crew – which somehow includes a familiar face in the shape of Han – agree to split up and lay low with the cash they've made. It's all going well until Dom receives a call from Mia telling him that Letty has been murdered.

At the same time, it appears that the events in Miami have given Brian



Brian and Roman Pearce, *2 FAST 2 FURIOUS*, 2003



Dom and Letty in **FAST & FURIOUS**, 2009

a second chance as we now find him working for the FBI. Although they don't know it at first, Brian and Dom are both after the same guy, but for very different reasons. Dom wants Fenix Calderon, the man who killed Letty. Brian is tasked with bringing down notorious drug dealer Arturo Braga. Fenix works for Braga and so Brian and Dom put aside their differences – and Brian's past betrayal – and work together to take the whole group down. They succeed, with Dom crushing Fenix with a car and Braga arrested, but Brian is badly injured and, despite Brian's pleas for him to run, Dom stays. Regardless of his involvement in the taking down of Braga's organisation, a judge hands him a twenty-five year sentence for his previous crimes without the chance of early parole. As the prison bus takes him away, the film ends with Brian, Mia and some of Dom's old crew chasing it down to break Dom out. Of course, this means that Brian has turned his back on a career in the law once more.

Now, with the fifth film in the series, you have to start to question

whether the film-makers started to jump the shark a little. Suddenly, everything went into overdrive, like a NOS-powered supercar.

Fast Five picks up exactly where the previous film ended; Dom is successfully released from the prison bus, and the group arrange to split up and meet up again in Brazil. Whilst waiting for Dom to arrive, Brian and Mia fall in with one of Dom's old crew, Vince, and agree to help boost some cars off of a train. Only problem is that the cars are under the control of DEA agents on the train. Some of the other team members seem specifically interested in one particular car and so Dom, who turns up mid-heist, advises Mia to steal the car and meet back at the safe house. One stunt involving the moving train, a bridge and Brian and Dom jumping into a river later and our heroes find themselves at the mercy of crime lord Hernan Reyes. They manage to escape but get the blame for the DEA agents who are killed on the train during the heist. As a result, U.S. DSS agent Luke Hobbs (Dwayne Johnson) is assigned to capture them. Vince is

revealed as working for Reyes when he steals a computer chip from the car that Mia took and Hobbs manages to capture Mia, Vince, Brian and Dom and begins to escort them back to the U.S.A. However, his team are ambushed and murdered and thanks to being saved by the very criminals he is tasked to take home, he agrees to assist with a plan to steal \$100 million of Reyes' money. They are helped by a new team that includes Han, Roman and Gisele (Gal Gadot) who was an assistant to Braga in the fourth film, amongst others.

It's all a bit *Ocean's Eleven*, only with fast cars, but the ante is upped, and the bar is raised, not least when a safe carrying the money is being dragged by cars driven by Dom and Brian through the streets of Rio, taking out police cars left and right. It's entertaining and at this stage of the series, we seem to have found the mark that the films should aim for, regardless of how ludicrous (or should that be Ludacris?) they are. Then, to top it all off, there is a final sting when Fuentes from part 2 turns up and hands over a dossier



Vince, Roman, Gisele, Dom, Brian, Mia, Han and Tej in **FAST FIVE**, 2011



Hobbs with Elena (Elsa Pataky), FAST FIVE, 2011

to Hobbs explaining that he needs to look at it. A picture inside suggests that Letty is, in fact, alive and well.

And so onto *Fast & Furious 6*...

Events pick up as Hobbs visits Dom to explain that the love of his life is still around. Brian and Mia have had a son, Han and Giselle are now in Hong Kong while Roman and Tej (Chris 'Ludacris' Bridges) are living in luxury.

Letty is now part of a crew run by Owen Shaw (Luke Evans) and Hobbs wants Dom and his team to help him take down Shaw, which they agree to in exchange for their records being cleared yet again. How many second chances do these guys want?

So they track Shaw down, but he escapes, with Letty shooting Dom without the slightest pause. Shaw discovers a picture of the two together from their past, but it appears that Letty is suffering from amnesia, having no clue who Dom is or what he really means to her. Once it's discovered that Shaw has ties to Braga, Brian gets himself put away to find out more info from the imprisoned crime lord. Braga also fills

Brian in on exactly how Letty survived her apparent demise.

The team reassembles and flies over to Spain to try and thwart Shaw's plan to hijack a military convoy and steal a computer chip that will allow him to activate a Nightshade device which will give the owner the ability to disable power in an entire region. Shaw then plans to sell it to the highest bidder.

As noted earlier, the set-pieces in the series have grown with it. Now, there are two. A motorway chase involving the gang and Shaw's crew in a tank, determined to stop them, and a final sequence on what must be the longest airstrip in the world. It's the plane sequence that's the real winner here, regardless that it defies all logic. The scene takes about ten minutes, and the vehicles must be travelling at speeds well over 60mph. That's a loooooong landing strip!

Of course, the good guys win; Letty gets her memory back enough to realise she's playing for the wrong side and we're ready for part 7. But not before we get yet another sting. Gisele dies in the



Letty and Owen Shaw in FAST & FURIOUS 6, 2013

airstrip sequence and, broken-hearted, Han returns home to Tokyo. We then see the same car crash that killed him during *Tokyo Drift*, which means the third film is actually a sequel to part 6! Sean Boswell is even a listed character in the new film out in April. Only now, we discover that Jason Statham was behind the wheel of the vehicle that crashed into Han's car and it was no accident, with the British hard-man making what appears to be a veiled threat that he is coming after Dom and his 'family'.

With part 7 out by the time you read this and parts 8 and 9 already confirmed, this vehicular monster seems to know no bounds. Dwayne Johnson has even gone on record to state that there may even be a spin-off for his character somewhere down the line. The budgets have grown to huge proportions (part 7 has a reported budget of \$250 million!) as have the expectations for ever zanier and impossible stunts. But a shadow has been cast with the untimely passing of one of the series' main stars, with Paul Walker dying in a car crash during the filming of part 7. His final scenes



Roman, FAST & FURIOUS 6, 2013

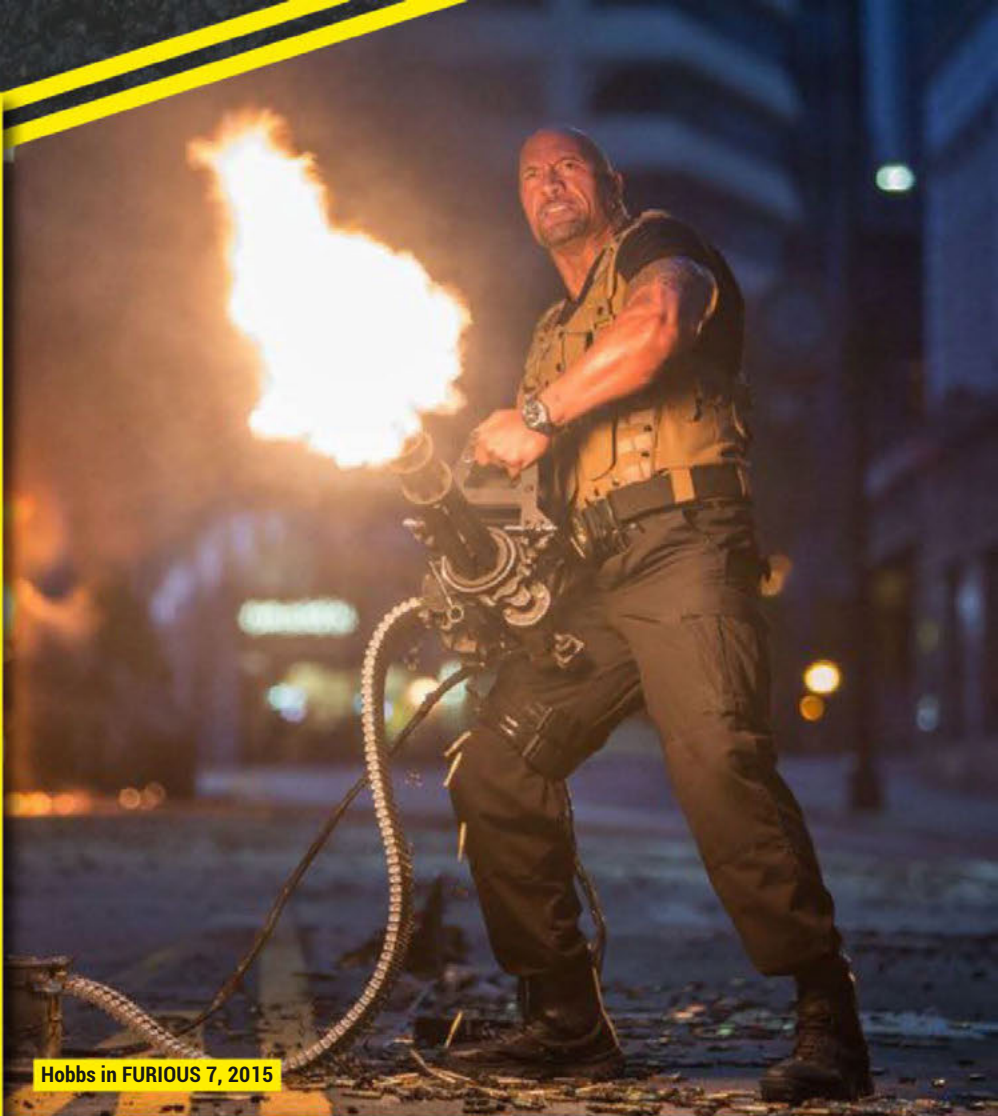
were completed between a mix of body double stand-ins (his brothers) and some face replacement CGI. You can get a real understanding about how much these films formed a bond between the actors. Everyone involved was gutted about Walker's death, and Diesel has even named his daughter after his friend. You can't get more familial than that. The story is that O'Conner will not be killed off, but retired from the series, giving a happy ending, rather than a cinematic death that may be a little too much like art imitating life.

The franchise has spawned multiple games across a myriad of consoles as well as lots of other collectable memorabilia, including toy cars and model kits as well as the usual T-shirts and lunchboxes. Also, as with any successful product, there are numerous drinking games circulating on the internet, all of which seem like they'd probably make you blind before the end of the chosen film you're watching and definitely throw you over the drink drive limit.

Let's not forget that the series segues into a lot of other genre and cult films that you enjoy if you're a STARBURST reader. For example, did you know that Han's surname is Seoul-Oh? We also have stars from our favourite – and not-so-favourite – superhero and video game movies. Eva Mendes was in *Ghost Rider*; Diesel is the voice of Groot; Gal Gadot is Wonder Woman; Dwayne Johnson will be Black Adam in *Shazam!* and Rodriguez was in the *Resident Evil* series. Those are just the high profile ones too.

So whatever your thoughts on the series, it is the unashamedly over the top action that strives to outdo itself every time which creates some summer blockbuster entertainment that doesn't have a cape, and you could do a lot worse than giving the franchise the love that it deserves. Long may it continue – in one form or another. After all, not everyone wants to live their life a quarter mile at a time.

FAST & FURIOUS 7 is out in cinemas now. See our review on page 79.



Hobbs in FURIOUS 7, 2015

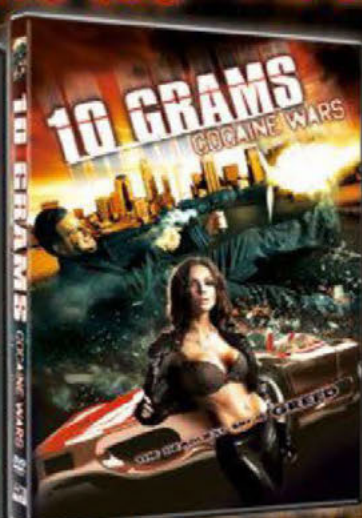
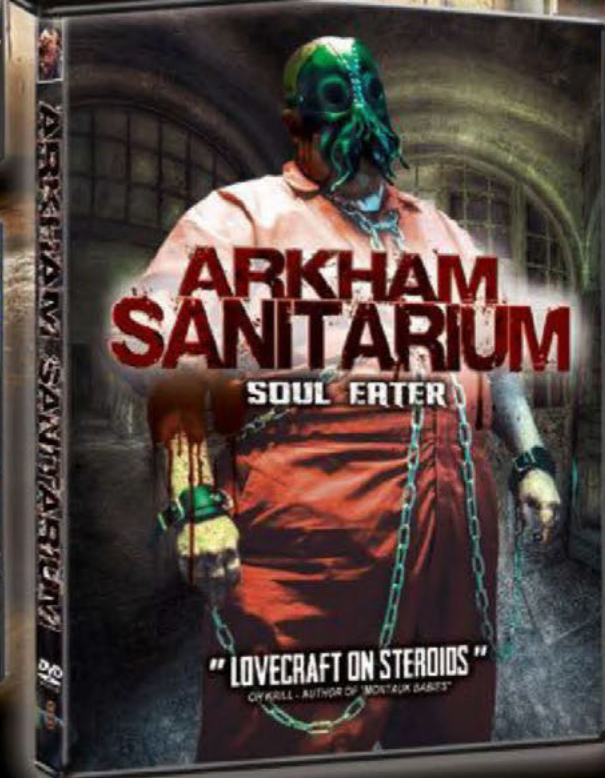
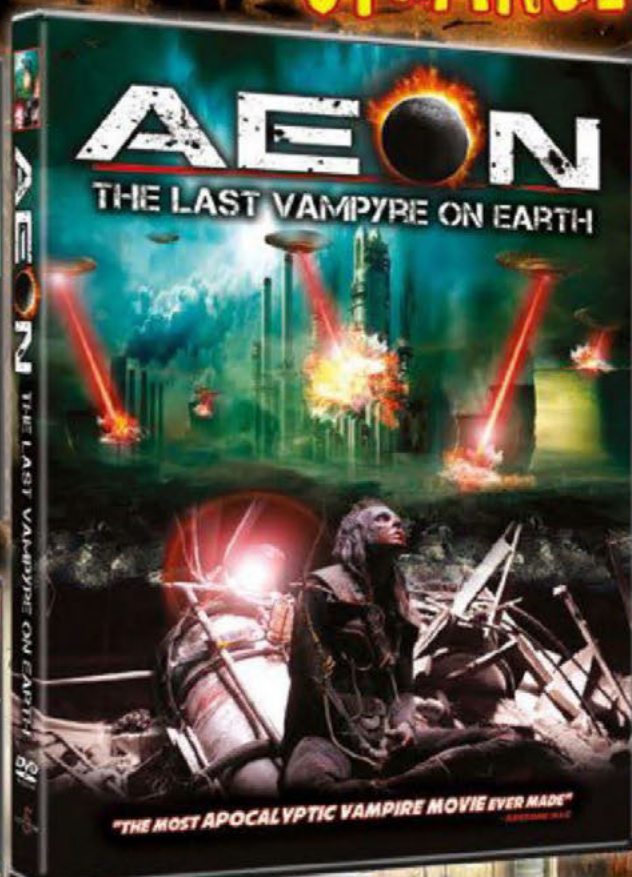
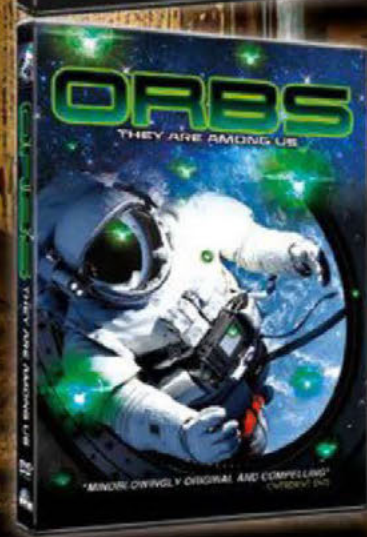
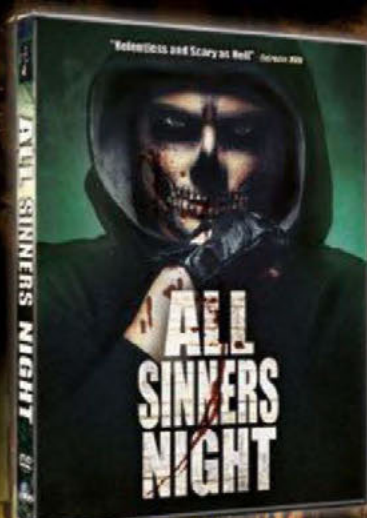


Dom with Kara (Ronda Rousey) FURIOUS 7, 2015



Dom faces Deckard Shaw (Jason Statham) in FURIOUS 7, 2015

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PLEASED TO EAT YOU



With the return of the small screen version of the classic cannibal HANNIBAL, we take a look back at what's gone before. Without even a snifter of Chianti...

Since Thomas Harris' novels, which introduced the psychopathic, cannibalistic psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter into the world's consciousness, there have been several attempts at depicting the character. The most famous – at least for a long while – was Sir Anthony Hopkins, whose chilling debut in Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1992) earned Academy Awards and acclaim all over the globe. Indeed, the film was the first 'horror' to win in the major Oscar categories for over seventy years. The character had been seen on screen before, however, in Michael Mann's 1986 *Manhunter*, with Brian Cox in the role. But it's the current portrayal by Mads Mikkelsen in the TV series of *Hannibal* that is the more revelatory. With an uncompromisingly graphic tone, and an emphasis on the gastric, the show has made the characters and storylines of the original books meatier and far tastier than one could have ever imagined. Developed by Bryan Fuller (*Star Trek: Voyager*, *Pushing Daisies*, *Dead Like Me*), the show would push the boundaries of the NBC network, with scenes that would rival the cable channels for bad taste and gore.

Arguably fleshing the character out even more than the novels, the show follows FBI Special Investigator Will Graham (Hugh Dancy) who has an uncanny ability to put himself in the mind of serial killers, feeling and experiencing the crimes within his imagination making him able to understand and piece together the details of the events. He is helping

by Martin Unsworth



Special Agent Jack Crawford (Laurence Fishburne), who is getting frustrated by the bizarre murders that have been taking place in the town. One missing college girl in the first episode is found mounted atop a deer's head like some macabre work of art, her lungs cut from her body. Graham's intuition and skill lead him to believe the killer isn't the same person they are looking for. Also aiding the pair is Dr Hannibal Lecter, who is so revered as a psychiatrist, he quickly becomes a confidant to them, and attempts to give his insight into the workings of both the mind of the killer, and Graham himself. As the 'visions' of the killer's actions get stronger, Will finds his own psyche unravelling.

Season One continued with a similar trend for the opening episodes, almost like a police procedural drama such as *CSI* or *Criminal Minds*. Although there was a unique point of interest throughout – the discovery of bodies mutilated and then displayed in elaborately artistic ways. As well as the individual cases that fill the series, Crawford and Graham begin to investigate the case of Dr Abel Gideon (Eddie Izzard), who has murdered a nurse at the Baltimore State Hospital, where he has been imprisoned for two years. The killing is in the style of the 'Chesapeake Ripper' – a serial killer who

stopped killing at the same time Gideon was put away. Running the hospital is Dr Frederick Chilton (Raúl Esparza), who is somewhat of a glory hunter, desperate to make his mark, if not in medicine then in the weird world that makes celebrities out of serial killers. With Gideon under his 'care', he makes all the right noises to say that he has indeed got the Ripper. However, as Graham is attempting to figure out if Gideon is the infamous killer, he receives a call with a recording of a trainee who went missing two years earlier while consulting on the Ripper case. He assumes it's the real Ripper who's made the call, so he conspires with crime blogger, Freddie Lounds (Lara Jean Chorosteki) to confirm Gideon is the indeed the Ripper, in the hope it will enrage the egotistical side of the real murderer. Now, it's no real spoiler to reveal that Lecter is, in fact, a very bad man. We've all seen the movies. What the series does is place that evil within an environment in which the tension of knowing what he is capable of is stretched to breaking. In this case, we find out through flashbacks that it is the calmly-spoken psychiatrist himself who is the Chesapeake Ripper.

And while we're well aware of Hannibal's preferences when it comes to culinary delights, it's not exploited in any salacious way. In fact, the

meals we see him lovingly make are all quite mouth-wateringly appealing. Except, of course, we know where the produce has come from. These cooking scenes are shot as if they were food porn, making other (serious) catering shows pale into insignificance and the Saturday morning TV shows look like unappealing leftovers. Cannibalism has never been so delicious.

As tasty as the meals may be, the depiction of the brutal and grisly murder scenes could be rather unpalatable to some. Make no bones about it, *Hannibal* doesn't hold back on the gore. But it's in the presentation of the victims that the show (and indeed, its killer/s) excels. Almost all are a work of art. If the macabre skeleton statue seen in the opening of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* impressed, the horror art critics have a field day with this show.

As well as the core cast of characters, a few other regulars have key roles. Another professor of psychiatry, Dr Alana Bloom (Caroline Dhavernas) knows and works with both Graham and Lecter, and will become a strong ally for Graham. Special Agent Beverly Katz (Hettienne Park) is the Crime Scene Investigator who plays a key role in the downfall of Graham, but who would later meet her own terrible fate when digging into



Lecter's secrets [see box out]. A cool and curious addition is Dr Bedelia Du Maurier (Gillian Anderson) who is Lecter's own psychotherapist, and who knows more about the less law-abiding tendencies of the calmly-spoken doctor than most. Apparently, she was also attacked by one of his former patients too, perhaps giving her motives a sinister and unethical twist.

With Dr Lecter helping Graham and Crawford in their investigations, he's also able to plant some seeds of suspicion Graham's way when he begins suffering hallucinations due to an inflammation of the brain (although Lecter insists this is kept from him so he can continue their analysing sessions) This, coupled with the vivid visions of the murders he experiences, lead those around him to believe that Graham himself could be the killer they are looking for, when they find human remains that match the victims of the copycat killer they have been

chasing. As Graham is getting closer to understanding and suspecting Lecter, he almost kills the doctor, but Crawford arrives on the scene just in time. Season One culminates with Graham behind bars in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. When Lecter visits him in the final moments, he pauses to possibly take in the ambience of somewhere where we as a knowing audience are more familiar with seeing him.

For the first few episodes of the show's second season, Graham is still the assumed killer, and is set to be committed, despite his protests of what he has found out about Lecter. Their relationship, however, grows into something much more sublime than victim and tormentor. The doctor has taken the mantle left by Graham's incarceration as unofficial liaison for the FBI on the continuing bizarre murder cases they face. An early one involves a killer who is creating a mosaic of human cadavers in a disused silo. Lecter discovers the perpetrator





before the police, and cunningly stitches him into his own creation.

Graham's trial is derailed when the judge is found murdered and displayed in the courtroom in the fashion of Lady Justice [see box out], giving a temporary reprieve for the falsely-accused man. This season is naturally not without its shocks either, with several key characters meeting their untimely and gruesome end. The 'fake' Chesapeake Ripper, Gideon is broken from his cell and winds up being fed his own leg at the hands of the man whose crimes he claimed as his own, and CSI agent Katz, just as she was believing and about to prove Graham's innocence, ends up displayed sectioned in Perspex tableaux. Lecter himself almost comes a cropper when an orderly at the asylum (who had killed a court bailiff and mounted him on a stag's head in an attempt to clear Graham's name) kidnaps him and almost hangs him, but for the opportune arrival of Crawford.

We also get to meet Mason Verger

(Michael Pitt), the wealthy but obnoxious heir to a meatpacking company, whose sister, Margot (Katherine Isabelle) was a patient of Lecter. Verger had raped and abused his sister from an early age, and he himself agrees to therapy, if only to see what has been discussed about him. When he discovers Margot is pregnant with Will Graham's child, he arranges a car crash and forces doctors to remove her womb, so that he could be the only family member to reproduce and pass on the family inheritance. A plan to feed Lecter to his prize pigs backfires and Mason himself is held captive by Lecter, who with the help of a hallucinogenic drug, and under the doctor's suggestion, cuts up his face, as well as his own nose – and then eat it. Talk about spiting your face...

As the series goes on, Graham (now exonerated) begins to work even closer with Lecter, becoming almost a party to his crimes, while all the time playing Crawford nearer to the truth – to the point that an invitation to dinner from the doctor isn't as appetising for him. In an explosive climax to the season,



Crawford and many others are left either injured or dead, and Lecter, betrayed by Graham, leaves for France with his psychotherapist, Dr Du Maurier.

So what can we expect in Season Three? We already know the episode titles this time around (at least up to a pivotal Episode 8) will be named after Italian dishes (the first were French, second Japanese), so the delightful gastronomic delights are likely to continue in some form - but surely not as elaborately as before since the 'cat is out of the bag' about the good doctor. Also, at one point we will time travel - Fuller revealing on Twitter that it will cover four different time periods in the story - and meet Francis Dollarhyde (Richard Armitage), 'The Tooth Fairy' from the *Red Dragon* novel (also seen in *Manhunter*), and no doubt Lecter's imprisonment. Whether this means this season will see the doctor get his comeuppance remains to be seen. Mason Verger will return, albeit with a different actor - Joe Anderson - in the now-mutilated and vengeful role. What we won't see is any reference to Clarice Starling or Buffalo Bill (although veiled versions of the character have already appeared), as the rights to *The Silence of the Lambs* were not secured in the TV deal. Also confirmed is a guest appearance from Zachary Quinto, and rumours abound that Fuller may well get his wish to cast David Bowie this time around (he had tried earlier but the legend was unavailable).

Whatever happens, we can be sure the gruesome cuisine and elaborately sick crime scenes will continue for another thirteen episodes at least.



HANNIBAL SEASON THREE will begin on USTV on June 4th, with a UK screening expected to be shortly after.



5 Grisliest Works Of Art

HANNIBAL

Episode 2.03:
"Hassun"

THE JUDGEMENT

As Will is due in court, things are derailed when the judge is killed and displayed in a rather symbolic and very appropriate fashion.



Episode 2.05:
"Mukōzuke"

CSI HIRST

Displayed Damien Hirst-style, Crime Scene Investigator Beverly Katz poked her nose into Hannibal's affairs a little too much, and paid the ultimate, if stylish, price.



Episode 1.09:
"Trou Normand"

HUMAN TOTEM

Fabulously inventive as always, this gruesome, but rather beautiful display was as stunning as it was shocking.



Episode 1.08: "Fromage"

IS IT A CELLO OR JUST A BIG FIDDLE?

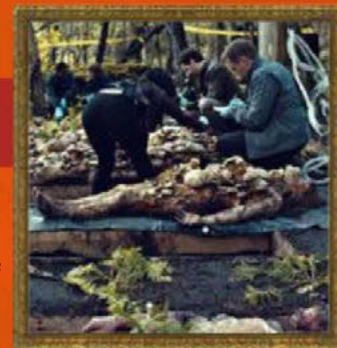
This will certainly inspire you to practice more, as members of the Baltimore Orchestra end up with their vocal cords used as cello strings. And yes, they actually play as well as cat gut.



Episode 1.02:
"Amuse-Bouche"

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

The killer here could well have been Alan Titchmarsh, as he uses his victims as fertiliser to aid the growth of his mushrooms. Sounds like a fungi, eh?



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FAST & FURIOUS 7

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: JAMES WAN / SCREENPLAY: CHRIS MORGAN / STARRING: VIN DIESEL, PAUL WALKER, JASON STATHAM, MICHELLE RODRIGUEZ, JORDANA BREWSTER, TYRESE GIBSON, LUDACRIS, DWAYNE JOHNSON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The box office juggernaut that is the Fast and Furious series continues to roll on in its seventh iteration, starting as it means to go on with the badass introduction of new antagonist Deckard Shaw (Statham), with a slow reveal of just how much damage this one man can do on a simple hospital visit to his crippled brother (Luke Evans), the villain of the previous film. There's just enough time to catch up with "heroes" Dom (Diesel), his amnesiac lover Letty (Rodriguez), his sister Mia (Brewster) and her husband and ex-cop, ex-FBI agent and now adrenaline junky Brian (the late Paul Walker), techie Tej (Ludacris) and joker Roman (Gibson) before Deckard is hunting them down one by one. If you haven't been paying attention to the series until now, you won't find any helpful primers here. Characters from previous instalments are introduced with little or no background details, so if you don't know who Han (Sung Kang), Elena (Elsa Pataky) or Sean (Lukas Black) are, then you're out of luck.

Dom initially goes on the offensive, not the best idea when you are dealing with an international Black Ops bogeyman but when Dom and Shaw square off within the first 30 minutes, it looks like this could be the shortest entry in the series, right up until they are thankfully interrupted by Kurt Russell's

"Mr Nobody"; a "ghost" to Shaw's "shadow". He has a MacGuffin and a convoluted plan for Dom and his team to carry out, so they can more easily track down Shaw, despite that fact that he turns up at every step along their globetrotting adventure. To be unkind you could describe this middle section as padding, rounding out the running time between two fat slices of Statham action at the beginning (Statham vs. The Rock) and the end (Statham vs. Diesel), if it all weren't so damned entertaining.

Set piece after set piece is packed full of action, excitement and humour. The target audience won't bat an eye as Dom and co. parachute cars out of planes midflight, follow this up with numerous fender benders both on and off a picturesque mountain road, attempt a daring break-in in Dubai featuring a fantastic scrap with MMA star Ronda Rousey, all accompanied by Dom's apparently one-man mission to prove that cars can, in fact, fly.

The action culminates in a multi-part climax back on the gang's home turf of LA with the main characters splitting up to deal with their own obstacles as part of a larger plan, which, for the most part, does not disappoint. The climax of the Statham versus Diesel duel does fall slightly flat but there are obvious reasons for this

once you've seen the film and this is made up for by the comeuppance handed out to Shaw's comrades.

After seven films, the formula should really be getting stale by now and the filmmakers should have reached a dead end, unable to top their crazy stunts from previous episodes but so far they have done it again and retained the humour and relative smarts that makes the more recent movies such a box office draw. Many may scoff at these films but it takes a clever mind to engineer a large number of action scenes where the heroes very rarely use a gun, and avoid repeating or not living up to the spectacle of the past.

The tragic death of actor Paul Walker is handled sensitively and touchingly and both the actor and the character he portrayed are given a fitting send off, without being maudlin. Despite his passing during production, Walker appears in the majority of the film and several action scenes focus entirely on him.

For a series that was all about the muscle, it has developed a surprising amount of heart.

IAIN MCNALLY

EXPECTED ★★★★★★ ★★ 7

ACTUAL ★★★★★★ ★★ 9

STARBURST



THE TOWN THAT DREADED SUNDOWN

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: ALFONSO GOMEZ-REJON / SCREENPLAY: ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA / STARRING: ADDISON TIMLIN, TRAVIS TOPE, VERONICA CARTWRIGHT, ANTHONY ANDERSON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The newsreel's a-flowing, the kids're near on kissin' and a seri'l killer stalks the highroad. Folks of a certain age might just recall the name, *The Town That Dreaded Sundown*, from a flick of some years since. Based 'round the story of a man who walked the rows in Texarkana, this picture follows the thoughts and actions of a young lady named Jami as she finds herself supplicant to a sadist's crime while trying to find herself some peace.

So far, so hokey. Director Alfonso Gomez-Rejon's film is of a certain taste. On the one hand, the feature follows the anguish of real crime; its lingering camera stalks silent moments like nightmare voices hiding in the victim's woes from the otherwise sun-kissed daylight. On the other hand, the feature ups the ante with quick cuts, arcing cams and pounding beats that'd make the most determined bogeyman dizzy while occasional in-scene music emphasises the fundamental reasons why good men do ridiculous, damaging things. This cinematic schizophrenia gets frustrating as it often feels as though the story is interrupted for the sake of checklist-ready set pieces. On the other hand, it does provide an effective window into a world where small-town mentality means people are just dying to be noticed.

Addison Timlin, as Jami, is the film's core (and no, no Halloween candy for noticing the name). She's oddly cast as the 'weird' girl because of her naturalistic beauty, hidden here under dark tresses. That said, it's impossible not to empathise with her confusion, and while her dialogue is sometimes a little 'last paper of term', the inclusion of additional effects such

as Michael Goi's intense cinematography make it largely believable. It also helps that Travis Tope's Nick brings up the rear as a befuddled beau who is more than he seems, and their scenes together contain an interesting connection that is a slight departure from genre norm.

As the title suggests, this is a film about a time out of time. It shows a fascination with true crime narratives and tries to be sensationalist and super-clever while also being understanding. As such, it masquerades as a slasher flick when it's actually more like a drama. It repeats some tropes and yet challenges others in a heartbeat and may come out as a slightly non-committal political point-scoring exercise that ultimately doesn't defend some of the characters it eulogises; a pretty and well-meaning but muddled, modernised

half-homage by someone who may have watched too much MTV. Indeed, some of the more caricatured performances are emphasised repeatedly by shots so knowing you'd think it'd understand when to quit rather than throwing up yet another suspense-killing straw man.

The Town That Dreaded Sundown critiques the cult of the serial killer movie and gleefully enjoys their exploits. Its impressive detail will stand a lot of rewatching, both as vision and as context. The problem is with meta, that (while it can be better) sometimes it jus' repeats.

DR. KAREN OUGHTON





INSURGENT

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: ROBERT SCHWENTKE / SCREENPLAY: BRIAN DUFFIELD, AKIVA GOLDSMAN, MARK BOMBACK / STARRING: SHAILENE WOODLEY, THEO JAMES, KATE WINSLET, JAI COURTNEY, ANSEL ELGORT, MILES TELLER / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The second of the Divergent series is here, continuing the tale of Tris Prior (Woodley, aka the Mary Jane that never was) as she battles to get by and find her true calling in a world segmented into varying "factions" and on the brink of war. Yep, this is standard Young Adult affair at its most Young Adult and with a large dollop of sci-fi obviously thrown in.

As introduced in the previous film, this "dystopian future" (as in generic cinematic lingo for any future world that has gone to shit) finds people allotted to one of five different factions. Well, apart from those who cannot be pinpointed into one particular pot and who end up ticking various boxes, with those people being known as Divergent. Of course, there's always bad guys at play in these type of situations, with Jeanine (Winslet) leading the Erudite group in a quest for complete control of all and sundry, not to mention hunting down Tris for her gifts. As such, Tris is involved in a brewing war as she has to come to terms with who she is, what she can do, and to essentially thwart the corruption and political power plays of the day whilst forming/breaking bonds and relationships (which happens far too frequently) as she goes.

Insurgent is a strange beast in how the story is massively bland yet a lot of the performances are surprisingly good. Sure, Kate Winslet feels majorly underused in her Bond villain-lite role, but the main leads of Shailene Woodley and Theo James actually do far better than you'd think in such an action-heavy sci-fi effort. To look at, one would never pin Woodley down as somebody who can grab your attention as the focal

point of an explosive actioner, yet she does, and she has to receive huge credit for being able to do so. James is decent enough as Four, Tris' partner in crime, and then there's also Jai Courtney as a wonderfully menacing presence as part of Jeanine's muscle on the hunt for Tris and Co. Miles Teller's rogue Peter and Ansel Elgort's Caleb (brother of Tris) are so-so at best, mind, with both characters feeling just a little clichéd.

And that's part of the problem of Divergent; it all seems far too familiar. The basic plot points of the story have been seen a thousand times before, only maybe not quite as stylised. The look of the film is actually rather mesmerising at points, with the SFX work far better than what many may expect. Still, a glossy sheen and a

strong central performance cannot make up for the cold, played out, shell of a story that the film is trying to tell.

Fans of generic YA fodder may get tight in the pants in excitement at Divergent, but for the rest of us who've seen these stories more times than we'd like to admit, it's all just a tad bland, predictable and yawn-inducing. Still, the film does again mark out Shailene Woodley as a talent to keep your eye on. It's just a shame that her performance is wasted on such a below-par effort.

ANDREW POLLARD

EXPECTED ++++++ 6

ACTUAL +++ 4



STARBURST



HOME

CERT: U / DIRECTOR: TIM JOHNSON / SCREENPLAY: TOM J. ASTLE, MATT EMBER / STARRING: JIM PARSONS, RIHANNA, STEVE MARTIN, JENNIFER LOPEZ / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Big Bang theorists will get a kick out of hearing Sheldon voicing an alien invader, while kids will get a sugar rush from Rihanna songs and visuals that are positively bursting with bright colours in Dreamworks' latest animation, *Home*. Genetically engineered to be a success, Home feels designed to sell merchandise and Rihanna records to excitable children waiting not very patiently for the Minions movie to arrive.

The Boovs are a race of small purple aliens who spend their existence following their cowardly leader from planet to planet. The Boovs know only how to run away from danger and, as a superior race of aliens known as the Gorg keep coming to destroy them, the Boovs are forced to continually flee, each time finding a new home planet. When they set up shop on Earth, unpopular Boov Oh (Parsons) becomes public enemy number one amongst his species as he reveals the location of their new home to their sworn enemies. Forced to flee the Boov authorities, Oh teams up with feisty little girl Tip (Rihanna), who has lost her mother when the Boov invaded. Can Oh help Tip to find her mother, but more importantly can the pair overcome their differences to save the planet from annihilation?

The familiar nerdy vocal tones of The Big Bang Theory's Jim Parsons will thrill children as he makes Oh a loveable character, especially when compelled to involuntary break into dance to those nailed-in Rihanna singles. He may look like a purple minion, but with Parsons

providing vocals Oh really comes to life as a surprisingly warm character. It's also a joy to see a character with the beautiful skin tone of Tip, spiritedly voiced by Rihanna, and the script sometimes subtly touches on ideas of acceptance and the difficulties of fitting in when moving to a new home.

What is less welcome is the frequent interruption of the singer's own songs on the soundtrack. It would have made more sense if *Home* was a musical and Tip burst into song with the voice of the pop sensation. As is, the songs often feel hammered home and you can almost hear Rihanna's record label rubbing their hands as they squeeze the songs in anywhere they can. At some points, rather than letting Rihanna do any of the emoting as Tip, the songs take over on the soundtrack, injecting a bit of much needed emotion into what could have been pretty stale proceedings.

Despite this cramming of singles onto the soundtrack, *Home* is also bursting with imagination and colour. The story is so swiftly set up to keep kids from fidgeting in their seats, that there isn't much time to dwell on the Boov's backstory. Neither is the takeover of Earth a particularly well thought-out or memorable set piece. Nevertheless, once Oh and Tip meet, the story starts to fizzle as Oh brings vitality and colour while Tip brings the sass. Transforming Tip's car into a colourful slushy spewing flying vehicle, the slapstick will no doubt impress children while the heart put into

their mismatched buddy relationship will inevitably tug at the heartstrings.

Some of the running jokes are fun, with Steve Martin's fearful leader of the Boovs getting the most laughs while finding new uses for a range of ordinary Earth objects from tyres to vacuum cleaners. Jennifer Lopez barely gets a look in as Tip's mum, and the inclusion of Tip's cat will no doubt just help to sell a few more toys.

Still, it's Jim Parsons that really makes *Home* worth a visit. He brings real personality and warmth to what could have been an annoying and completely forgettable character. The animators also do their best to keep the Boovs kiddy friendly; both very odd in design but also huggable in their minion-like slapstick antics. With a story that takes in outer space, America, Paris and Australia, *Home* certainly never settles too long and will keep kids gripped throughout its snappy run time. Most surprisingly and satisfyingly, *Home* manages to sneak in a winning subtext about cultural imperialism. Just don't be surprised if the little tykes that watch it have been programmed to listen to even more of Rihanna's records on repeat on the way home from the cinema. On the bright side, it might be a welcome break from Let It Go.

PETE TURNER

EXPECTED ★★★★★ ★★★★★ 5

ACTUAL ★★★★★ ★★★★★ 6

THE LATEST HOME
VIDEO RELEASES
REVIEWED & RATED

REVIEWS



PREDESTINATION

DVD & BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: THE SPIERIG BROTHERS / STARRING: ETHAN HAWKE, SARAH SNOOK, NOAH TAYLOR / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Everyone loves a time travel romp, right? All those paradoxical twists and turns are manna to filmmakers trying to give something unexpected to the seen-it-all-before generation (that's us). Mind you, they're a nightmare for the reviewer who can't tell you what it's about without all sorts of spoiler-horror. So *Predestination* is the Spierig Brothers' latest movie, in which Ethan Hawke is a "Temporal Agent" (of course he is) trying to prevent The Fizzle Bomber (no, really) from carrying out an attack that has killed thousands before they can actually do it (because it's about time travel, duh). That's your lot plot-wise, other than to say it's based on a Robert Heinlein short story so it comes with pretty high expectations.

Any good? Funny you should ask [*what with it being a review and everything* – Ed]. Actually, yes it is. If you have a look at some of the mainstream reviews they'll tell you that the plot is "challenging", "head-spinning", "confusing" etc. However, as you lot are pretty au fait with the genre we can assure you that it's none of these things. It's by no means brainless but it is about as easy to follow as a paradoxiwotsit time travel caper can be. You'll work out most of what's going to happen within

thirty minutes (although we confess to missing part of the twist despite it being telegraphed in the opening scene). So if it's so predictable, why is it good?

Basically, this is a decent yarn well told. Amazing how many movies fail on this basic requirement. The Spierig Brothers have eschewed the trappings of the action movie that so many of these paradoxthings seem to love and told a big story by way of the interaction between a handful of key characters. The first half of the movie is just a conversation in a bar interspersed with flashbacks. It relies entirely on the core cast of Hawke, Taylor and Snook to deliver the goods. In fact, Sarah Snook's rather brilliant performance is absolutely key to the film's success. We won't say too much about it but the only times she slightly fails to convince in an extremely challenging role, it's more down to the directors than her. Even the rather odd plot strand (from Heinlein's source story) about young women training to be astronaut "companions" is pretty well handled and surprisingly entertaining.

It might be a bit predictable to us time-travelling veterans, but it's tight and does what's needed with some splendid

performances. Everyone loves a time-travel romp, right? All those paradoxical twists and turns are manna to filmmakers trying to... [*Whoa! Stop right there* – Ed]

Oddly enough, this review was actually written on 18th August 1979. It was discovered on an old C90 cassette recorder that... [*Right, step away from the keyboard and no one gets hurt* – Ed].

JOHN KNOTT

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



STARBURST

DVD & BLU-RAY



HOOKED UP

DVD + VOD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: PABLO LARCEN / SCREENPLAY: PABLO LARCEN, EDUARD SOLA / STARRING: STEPHEN OHL, JONAH EHRENREICH, NATASCHA WIESE, JÚLIA MOLINS / RELEASE DATE: APRIL 27TH

Pitched as the first feature recorded entirely on an iPhone (although that was actually James Cullen Bressack's *To Jennifer*), you might be forgiven for expecting something from the cheaper, nastier end of the found footage genre. And from the unnecessarily gross opening scene, to the equally grotesque one that bookends the back end of the movie,

you'd be right. The characters are all hideous human beings who you will be happy to see the back of, and the conceit of telling the story from somebody's mobile will have many viewers reaching for the off switch.

And yet the two male leads, in spite of one being exceptionally dull and the other exceptionally irritating, somehow

manage to sustain your interest through the film's 80 minutes. You'll never quite be rooting for them, but if you surrender to the premise (actually a lot more logical than you might suppose, although the explanation is rather thrown away) you'll want to know what fates befall them.

Peter (Ohl) has just split up with his girlfriend of six years, and Tonio (Ehrenreich) whisks him off to Barcelona for the ultimate hedonistic amnesiac. But Tonio is something of a wild card and before the two boys know what's happening, they find themselves trapped in an apparently haunted house with only a psychotic ghost for company.

That's about it. Given the nature of the movie, it's basically a sequence of very long scenes, usually entirely unbroken (except for discreet edits), and has the potential to be very dull indeed. But the notion that you're actually watching something real – an idea given weight by the iPhone cinematography – makes the end result more compelling than it really has any right to be. That *Hooked Up* was written, produced and directed by Spaniards – importing American

talent in order to make their film internationally agreeable – lends it a hint of unpredictability, its genealogy going back to films like *Tesis* as much as *The Blair Witch Project*. The inclusion of nudity and some startlingly graphic moments is enough to make the observer feel more voyeur than viewer, and is effective and unsettling.

The acting is variable, but that's essentially a result of the long takes, and kudos goes to both Ohl and especially Ehrenreich for carrying the film as well as they do. There is hardly a moment when you don't believe in what's happening, no matter how ludicrous it might seem.

The biggest surprise *Hooked Up* has to offer, though, is the number of names listed in the credits; a testament to how convincing a film they've made. This will never be regarded as a great, but it is unexpectedly entertaining and if the iPhone conceit is an indication of things to come, it might have been a lot worse.

JR SOUTHALL

★★★★★★★★★★ 5



DARK SUMMER

DVD + VOD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: PAUL SOLET / SCREENPLAY: MIKE LE / STARRING: PETER STORMARE, GRACE PHIPPS, KEIR GILCHRIST, STELLA MAEVE, MAESTRO HARRELL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

When 17-year-old Daniel (Gilchrist) is placed under house arrest for cyberstalking a schoolmate, he thinks his already isolated life has hit rock bottom. With an absent mother and forbidden from using any form of technology surely things cannot get any worse. Until that is, he does find a way back online with the help of best friends Abby (Maeve) and Kevin (Harrell). When the victim of his crimes Mona (Phipps) commits suicide while Skyping with him, Daniel is plunged

into a nightmare as his newly deceased victim somehow seems to be haunting him, much to the weary disbelief of his accomplices.

Dark Summer is laced with a creepy intensity that is noticeably lacking in many similarly themed supernatural thrillers. Director Paul Solet has generated an atmosphere of suffocating malevolence that seems to permeate your soul, that while watching instills a sense of constant dread of what might be about to happen. And this

feeling simply does not let go. The minimalist, almost invasive direction intentionally meanders throughout, inserting you reluctantly right into the middle of Daniel's slowly escalating terror. His is a form of psychological suffering that renders him deeply paranoid, jumping at shadows and reluctantly questioning his own sanity.

Much in the same way that one of last year's great surprises *The Babadook* from Jennifer Kent created a brooding discomfort that irresistibly takes hold without overreliance on jump scares, Dark Summer expertly unsettles the viewer. There are some scares, of course there are, and there is a slight, perhaps unavoidable, predictability to some of them, but instead of detracting from the main plotline, they strangely add to the tension, allowing the audience a chance to take a deep breath and subsequently fall into the misconception of thinking they had recovered their composure.

For his part, Gilchrist is superb as the haunted Daniel, delivering a withering, darkly engaging performance around which the main plot of the film can circulate mysteriously.

Given the strength of his performance it would be easy, almost understandable for the small supporting cast to become lost but Maeve and Harrell excel in their roles, managing to balance awkward acceptance of the situation without resorting to hammy histrionics or exposition. With the legendary Peter Stormare adding his experienced presence to the film this is an ensemble cast that delivers on all fronts.

Simply put, Dark Summer is without doubt one of the superior thrillers you will be lucky enough to see in 2015. The deliberately low-key production teases the viewer and the erratic switches between uncomfortable silences and the pervasive, intrusively pulsing soundtrack demands an aura of discomfort from its audience. This is a chillingly effective film, and one that is never quite what you expect it to be. It is an experience that may not be enjoyed by everyone, but is certainly one to be remembered; and for all the right reasons.

JOHN TOWNSEND

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



DISCOPATH

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: RENAUD GAUTHIER / STARRING: JÉRÉMIE EARP-LAVERGNE, SANDRINE BISSON, IVAN FREUD, INGRID FALAISE, FRANÇOIS AUBIN / RELEASE DATE: MAY 4TH

Here's a gloriously gory, cheesy and sensational homage to the glory days of 1970s exploitation slasher flicks with a generous helping of Italian giallo thrown in for good measure. Renaud Gauthier's first full-length feature (hailing from 2013) takes us back to the sizzling summer of 1976 and the rise of bass-heavy disco music. Everyone's carrying unfeasibly huge beatboxes and

wearing tiny shorts or ludicrous flared loons. But meek burger joint chef Duane Lewis (Earp-Lavergne) doesn't move to the groove; an unfortunate disco music-related electrocution accident sizzled his father and now just the sound of a bassline or a hi-hat sends Duane into a psychopathic frenzy and turns him into an enraged killer obsessed with decapitation and mutilation -

often with the aid of seven-inch singles. Poptastic.

Against all the odds, Discopath is gloriously entertaining stuff. It effortlessly evokes the spirit of the movies it's merrily homaging from its pleasingly over-the-top plot to its fiercely inventive death sequences. Duane's first victim is butchered beneath the unsuspecting feet of disco dancers gyrating on a glass dance floor, another is throttled under strobe lighting. Fleeing to Montreal in the wake of his first murder in New York (much of the film is subtitled to reflect its French-speaking Canadian location), Duane masquerades as a deaf handyman in a preparatory school of nubile teenage girls. All is well until four years later when a bout of dormitory disco music sets him off again and he soon notches up his bloodiest kills yet, decapitating and slicing and dicing two young victims. Parallels with the 1976 New York disco killing send Manhattan 'tec Paul Stevens (Freud) to Montreal, where he teams up with local Police to track down Duane before he can kill again. But Duane has already set his sights on a flirty teacher and

history repeats itself as he electrocutes the school's repressed headmistress.

Discopath is clumsily stylish, occasionally in wonderfully bad taste, and generally hilariously over-the-top. The performances are all deliciously ripe (although there's the sneaking suspicion that Earp-Lavergne's demented, disturbingly-crazed Duane belongs in a less fanciful movie) and the handful of licensed '70s disco tunes (especially Walter Murphy's disco riff on 'Flight of the Bumblebee', sometimes better-remembered as the theme to the campy 1960s superhero series The Green Hornet) set the tone and the scene as deftly as Bruce Cameron's wobbly synth score. Lovers of old school, blood-drenched slashers will find Discopath irresistible and, at just over seventy minutes (not much longer than the average 1970s extended disco 12-incher) it won't test the patience of an audience just looking for a well-made, dumb-but-fun killer thriller.

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★★★ 8



A GOOD MARRIAGE

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: PETER ASKIN / SCREENPLAY: STEPHEN KING / STARRING: JOAN ALLEN, ANTHONY LAPAGLIA, STEPHEN LANG / RELEASE DATE: APRIL 20TH

What if, after twenty five years of blissful marriage, you discovered that your loving husband was also a serial killer? That's the question posed by A Good Marriage.

When Bob Anderson (LaPaglia) goes on yet another business trip, his wife Darcy (Allen) goes hunting in the

garage for some new batteries, but instead discovers a box containing the driving licence of a murdered woman from the last town he visited. After doing some more digging and checking online, Darcy realises that Bob is the serial killer called Beadie.

With her children grown up,

it's up to Darcy to either choose to do the right thing or hide her family's horrible secret to protect them all.

With a screenplay written by King himself, based on a tale that first appeared in his short story collection Full Dark, No Stars, the Bob character was inspired by Dennis Rader - the infamous real life BTK killer.

There are more misses than hits in the chequered history of King adaptations, and the legendary writer's involvement here does not land the film on the positive side of the fence. The movie is guilty of lacking any real tension, especially worrying considering that it is supposed to be a thriller. It has a real TV movie feel about it, with no real range - it doesn't have a cinematic edge at all. LaPaglia seems out of place in the main role, unable to offer the necessary gravitas that the character requires. You struggle to see the dark side of him, instead seeing Bob as a family man that does this on the side.

As with the real case of Rader's wife, you can understand her point of view

and the spur for her actions and Allen manages to keep the story rooted, but there's only so much she can do. Lang's character hovers on the periphery for the majority of the running time, whereas, regardless of his motives that are made clear later on, he could have been used much better as a plot twist that keeps the viewer on the edge of their seat.

Overall, A Good Marriage falls far short of what it could have been. A missed opportunity and grounds for divorce.

JD GILLAM

★★★★★★★ 5





COFFY

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: JACK HILL / STARRING: PAM GRIER, ROBERT DOQUI, WILLIAM ELLIOTT, BOOKER BRADSHAW, ALLAN ARBUS, SID HAIG / RELEASE DATE: APRIL 20TH

Jack Hill's 1973 classic finally gets a worthy Blu-ray release courtesy of Arrow Video, and it's certainly about time. Coffy (Grier) is a nurse whose younger sister is abused by a drug pusher. Using her female charm, sassy attitude and brutal initiative, Coffy sets out on a revenge mission to take on all no-good types who happen to get in her way as she looks to get to the root out the problem, be they drug dealers, pimps, mobsters, petty criminals or more.

Ever the quick thinker, Grier's Coffy utilises shotguns, drug-filled needles, broken bottles, razor blades, serving trays and even salad bowls as weapons as she looks to exact her revenge on those accountable. This roaring rampage of revenge (sorry, Quentin) is a hugely enjoyable one as this badass beauty infiltrates herself within the ranks of those she's seeking, which is initially headed up by the exquisitely pimptastic King George (DoQui), before it becomes clear that there are

others like scumbag mobster Vitroni (Arbus) in Coffy's sights.

Coffy is a film that is often quoted as being the definitive blaxploitation movie, and it's easy to see why. Pam Grier is on truly iconic form here, devouring dialogue just as easily as she smashes through the bad guys, quipping, "This is the end of your rotten life you motherfucking dope pusher!" whilst firing a shotgun to the face of one wrongdoer. And that's within the film's opening few minutes.

Whilst it is very much a film of its time, for better or for worse, and there are a few so-so performances dotted throughout Coffy, the sultry Pam Grier is a force of nature in this tale of revenge, betrayal and ass-kicking. There's an infinitely cool vibe running throughout Hill's movie, complete with dialogue that truly bites (although Grier's brief Jamaican accent is ropey at best). Throw in a frenetic soundtrack, wonderful fashions, ample servings of sex, Sid Haig as a snarling henchman, and a fistful of moustaches and afros, then you have a classic of its time.

Sure, certain performances

don't really stand up too well in retrospect, but Coffy is a vital film in the blaxploitation genre and beyond. With this new release, there's some nice recent interviews with Jack Hill and Pam Grier, plus an interesting video essay on the genre as a whole from Mikel J. Koven, although the highlight of the bonus content is likely the informative and engaging commentary from director Hill.

For those who've never seen Coffy, this is the perfect release to pick up. As for established fans of the film, there's likely enough here to warrant adding this new release to your collection, especially as the cleaned up HD restoration means that Coffy's revenge mission never looked so good.

Extras: Audio commentary with Jack Hill / 'A Taste of Coffy' brand new interview with Jack Hill / 'The Baddest Chick in Town' brand new interview with Pam Grier / 'Blaxploitation' video essay / Theatrical trailer / Image gallery / Collector's booklet

ANDREW POLLARD

+++++ 8



THE BLOB (1958)

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: IRWIN S. YEAWORTH JR. / SCREENPLAY: KAY LINAKER, THEODORE SIMONSON / STARRING: STEVE MCQUEEN, ANETA CORSAUT, EARL ROWE, OLIN HOWLAND, STEPHEN CHASE, JAMES BONNET / RELEASE DATE: MAY 4TH

By the mid-'50s the Cold War had intensified to such an extent that America had become obsessed with communism and its perceived threat to their internal security. Such fears led to McCarthyism and that, in turn, led to inward-looking concerns that perhaps this was itself an even greater threat to the American way. It's not entirely coincidental that sci-fi movies were

enjoying something of a golden age at this time and it was inevitable that they addressed these issues. So it was that... Oh wait.

Sorry, we're not reviewing Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) are we? We're doing The Blob. Yeah right, it's red and it's taking over small town America so it must be about communism. Except that, no matter how many books anyone would like to write on the subject, it

clearly isn't. It's a low-budget B-movie (that managed to come in under budget) with an icky-monster, teenagers, nice cars and a camp theme song. This is the quintessential drive-in flick and any resemblance to a "red menace" is purely coincidental (and at least one of the production team has said as much).

A young couple (McQueen and Corsaut) are doing whatever young couples did in their cars back then when they see a meteorite crash. Investigating, they find an old man (Howland) with something nasty stuck to his hand. It gets bigger and then the old man disappears. As does the nurse who was treating him, and then the doctor, and then a car mechanic, etc, etc. All the while the "mass" (as they call it) gets bigger and bigger. Oh, you get the idea. This is pretty basic '50s B-movie stuff. As it can't be shot ('cause it's like jelly, man) and fire, electricity and trichloroacetic acid (which we think you use on genital warts) all fail to have an effect, how will they destroy it? Well, we won't tell you, but it's pretty cool [do you see what he did there? -Ed].

Ultimately, The Blob is just great fun; it manages to be sort-of-horrifying while bringing a smile to your face at the same time. The cast are all a bit ropey but Steve McQueen (who at 27 looked nothing like the teenager he was supposed to be portraying – the scenes with his "dad" are a hoot) saves the day with his natural onscreen charisma. You can tell he was going to be a star. Unusually, The Blob is in colour and if we've got a very minor criticism, Blu-ray doesn't do the otherwise-adequate special effects any favours. It really is obvious that's a drawing of the diner with a Blob on it at the climax.

If you have the slightest affection for '50s sci-fi then you really need this one and, if you don't, it might just get you hooked. Then you can watch all the proper allegorical-hardcore-stuff. Go on, you know you want to.

Extras: Trailer, stills gallery

JOHN KNOTT

+++++ 8



OPEN WINDOWS

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: NACHO VIGALONDO / STARRING: ELIJAH WOOD, SASHA GREY, NEIL MASKELL / RELEASE DATE: APRIL 20TH

Open Windows, helmed by Spanish director Nacho Vigalondo, is not only madder than the Mad Hatter's tea party, it all hinges on your willing acceptance of broadband connections and

computer technology so fast that they feel positively futuristic. 4G? This must be 20G, at least! A dazzling neo-giallo drama that plays out almost entirely via webcams, laptops and mobile phone

cameras, the film is not without a certain sense of humour about, and awareness of, its own implausibility.

Nick Chambers (Wood) has won an Internet competition to have dinner with his favourite movie star, Jill Goddard (Grey). Told that the event has been cancelled at the last minute, a rightly annoyed Nick is roped into a bizarre game of online voyeurism by a cockney bloke (Maskell), a man who appears to be orchestrating events that further push the gullible fanboy into the realms of criminality.

Like a fibre optic cable running through screen history, the film pays homage to crime thrillers of the past and its master practitioners. Key figures of inspiration appear to be Louis Feuillade's *Fantômas* and Fritz Lang's infamous *Dr Mabuse*, with the director finding time to high-

five Alfred Hitchcock, Dario Argento and Brian De Palma along the way.

Sasha Grey is a captivating screen presence, and the camera clearly loves her. But what is it capturing exactly? A steely look – her eyes seem as blank as a great white shark's – is matched by a lack of polish as an actress. She functions in the movie in a not too dissimilar way to Marlene Dietrich in the films of von Sternberg or Barbara Steele in Mario Bava's *Black Sunday*. She's there as a fetish object, above all else. But with her history in pornos, Grey doesn't convince as a damsel in distress. She could eat you alive; maybe you want her to.

MARTYN CONTERIO

+++++ 7



SHERLOCK HOLMES

DVD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: VARIOUS / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: DOUGLAS WILMER, NIGEL STOCK / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Great Detective has surely never been more popular and there seems to be a Sherlock Holmes for all tastes in amongst the various current incarnations of Baker Street's finest. The BBC's slick, modern reinvention of Sherlock has made a superstar out of Benedict Cumberbatch, but there's also much to recommend in Jonny Lee Miller's slightly more generic American take on the same theme in *Elementary*, and Robert Downey Jr's two-fisted interpretation in the presently in-limbo Guy Ritchie movie series is quirky fun even if the series lost its way a little in *A Game of Shadows*. Later this year, Sir Ian McKellen will appear as a retired nonagenarian Holmes in the feature film *Mr Holmes*, based on Mitch Cullen's novel *A Slight Trick of the Mind*. But what we haven't had for some time is a traditional Sherlock Holmes prowling a

Victorian London of hansom cabs, choking fogs and singular mysteries. Jeremy Brett's Granada TV series, which ran from 1984 to 1994, was pretty much the definitive version of the classic image of Sherlock the 19th century sleuth; his considerable oeuvre came close to bringing the entire Conan Doyle canon to the small screen.

This charming new four-disc BFI DVD boxset will delight Holmes purists who may be a bit sniffy about the modernization of their hero, resurrecting as it does one of the 'great' (if often overlooked) Sherlocks as magnificently played by Douglas Wilmer for a twelve-part BBC series in 1965. The series itself was a spin-off from the anthology title *Detectives* (whose episode *The Speckled Band* is presented here) and ran to one series before Peter Cushing took over the role in a belated second

series in 1968. Only ten of the series' twelve episodes remain, and they're here in all their terribly earnest 1960s BBC glory – and almost without exception they're wonderfully enjoyable realisations of some of the best of Conan Doyle's short stories. Although typically stagey and theatrical, there's a decent amount of atmospheric location filming suggesting that this was surely a prestige production for mid-1960s British television, and in Wilmer we have easily one of the very best Sherlocks who, as many commentators have pointed out, bears an uncanny resemblance to the character as depicted in the famous Sidney Paget illustrations which graced the pages of *The Strand* magazine in the late 1890s. Wilmer's Holmes is clipped, sharp, unfussy and to the point, often evoking the style (if not the occasionally arch spirit) of Basil Rathbone in the long-running 1940s film series. Wilmer's Holmes is accompanied by Nigel Stock as John Watson, here very much the bumbling, slightly bloated caricature figure popularised by Nigel Bruce in the Rathbone films until his rehabilitation courtesy of David Burke and Edward Hardwick in the Brett series when Watson became more of an urbane confidante to Holmes rather than a slightly dim and naïve blunderer.

It's a relief to revisit these Holmes stories done straight; Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss's Sherlock has become

too keen to show how clever it is to concern itself with telling a proper story, and its lip service to Conan Doyle's originals sometimes does the legend of Sherlock Holmes little justice. The stories here – familiar titles such as *The Illustrious Client*, *The Devil's Foot*, *The Copper Beeches*, *The Red-Headed League*, *The Man With The Twisted Lip* – are very much the bread-and-butter stories which made Holmes' exploits so addictive to his wide-eyed Victorian audience. This lovingly-presented collection might not hold the attention of modern viewers who'd rather see their hero being clever with a mobile phone than painstakingly solving a puzzle with his finely-tuned deductive skills, but for fans who miss enjoying Holmes and Watson just getting on with the business of solving crimes without the benefit of any fancy gimmicks and snazzy visuals, this is an absolute joy and a boxset to hold as close to your chest as the man himself might hold his beloved violin.

Extras: Reconstructions of the two missing episodes with contributions from Douglas Wilmer / 2012 Wilmer interview / Five audio commentaries / Alternative title sequence for *The Illustrious Client* / Spanish audio for *The Speckled Band* / Souvenir booklet.

PAUL MOUNT

+++++ 8



NETWORK (1976)

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SIDNEY LUMET / SCREENPLAY: PADDY CHAYEFSKY / STARRING: FAYE DUNAWAY, PETER FINCH, WILLIAM HOLDEN, ROBERT DUVAL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The pleasure for the newbie, and perhaps the greatest reason to recommend *Network*, is looking at it and seeing how very relevant it still is. Though the film is and always will be very much a period piece (being made in the mid-70s, naturally everybody in it looks like they belong in *The Professionals*; frankly that's a look we're glad fashion left behind), the recent release of the film on Blu-ray serves as a timely reminder of just how close the news media

constantly is to giving into its worst excesses (such as fetishisation of graphic violence and overwhelming focus on celebrity 'scandals'). In an age where the tabloidisation of the news is a real and growing concern, it's nice to look back and see someone crying out, "I'm as mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore" without worrying about what Ofcom will think.

Though Sidney Lumet's direction is excellent and gets

the very best performances out of his stars, underneath it all there is an utterly superb script, filled to the brim with memorable lines ("I simply ran out of bullshit.") and clever scene construction (in particular, the scene where the activists and network officials are divvying up rights to the 'Mao Tse-tung Hour' is sublime). The screenplay was so good, in fact, that it won Paddy Chayevsky an Oscar. It did seem a bit odd that they would let Finch's character stay on the air after the stuff he said, mind.

If you've never seen *Network* (and this writer counted himself in that category until last week), now is definitely

the time and this is definitely the version to pick up. Arrow Video have given it the HD treatment and all the garish colours are there in their full glory. Of course, we've taken off two points because the film heavily features the '70s. Other than that, it's a near-perfect film; enjoyable on its own terms and relevant now more than ever.

Extras: *The Directors: Sidney Lumet – documentary (made in 1999) with interviews with numerous stars / Tune in Next Tuesday – visual essay from Dave Itzkoff / collector's booklet.*

SCOTT VARNHAM

★★★★★★★ 8



THE OFFENCE (1972)

DVD & BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SIDNEY LUMET / SCREENPLAY: JOHN HOPKINS / STARRING: SEAN CONNERY, TREVOR HOWARD, VIVIEN MERCHANT, IAN BANNEN, PETER BOWLES / RELEASED: APRIL 20TH

Now here's a curio from the history of British cinema. By the end of the '60s, Sean Connery had long-tired of Bond, but when George Lazenby quit the franchise after only one outing United Artists were prepared to offer Connery anything to return for *Diamonds are Forever* (1971). So apart from the inevitable truckload of money, they sweetened the deal by promising Connery that they would make any two films he

wanted (provided they weren't too pricey) and that he could play absolutely any part. Well one of the two never quite came off, but *The Offence* did and it couldn't have been anything less like a Bond. Naturally enough, it bombed.

Connery plays DS "Johnny" Johnson, a middle-aged copper who's been investigating all sorts of nasty brutal crime for twenty years. The film opens with Johnson beating

a suspected child rapist (Bannen) to death, and the story of how we got to this rather unpleasant state of affairs is told in flashback. This is very dark stuff and we really wouldn't recommend it as viewing to anyone who's on a bit of a downer. We see Johnson's memories in fleeting and repeated images of cold horror but, even bearing this baggage in mind, Johnson isn't exactly a sympathetic character. In fact, to those who saw the film at the time (both of them), Connery's performance must have been a revelation. He's sans toupée with a huge moustache, unmistakably middle-aged and his miserable childless home life couldn't be less glamorous. In fact, in his hat and sheepskin, Connery comes across like a more brutal proto-Jack Frost.

While it certainly isn't for the fainthearted, with Sidney Lumet directing, you won't be surprised that this is a quality movie. It's at its best in the early part of the film where we see the crime investigated against the bleak, bleak backdrop of '70s British suburbia and, perhaps surprisingly, this is so much more effective on Blu-ray. There's a real coldness

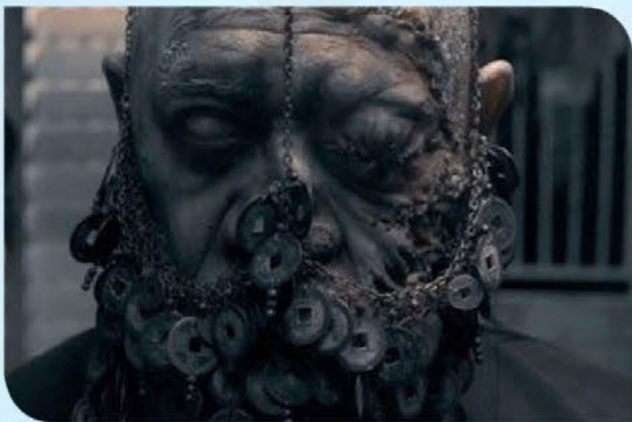
to the landscape and we seem to recall that the '70s really did look that miserable. In fact, it could be argued that the hideous contemporary architecture is a supporting star of the film (and we're pleased to note that the most offending examples have since been pulled down). But the film is less effective in the series of intense one-to-one scenes between Johnson and his wife (Merchant), a superior officer (Howard) and arguably even with the suspect himself (whose guilt or innocence is left entirely up to you). The problem with lengthy scenes like this is that they do rather give the game away that the source material was a stage-play. While that's fine in itself, it's nice if you can do rather better with your chosen medium than that. Mind you, the last of those confrontations does rather save it on that front as Ian Bannen is (as ever) brilliant.

Highly recommended even if it is utterly joy-free.

Extras: *Four interviews / Theatrical trailer / Booklet*

JOHN KNOTT

★★★★★★★ 8



RIGOR MORTIS

DVD / DIRECTOR: JUNO MAK / SCREENPLAY: LAI-YIN LEUNG, PHILIP YUNG / STARRING: ANTHONY CHAN, SIU-HO CHIN, FAT CHUNG / RELEASE DATE: APRIL 27TH

A dingy apartment building inhabited by supernatural beings soon blows up into terrifying chaos. When suicidal actor Siu-Ho (Chin Siu-Ho) moves in, he attempts to hang himself but is saved by

vampire hunter Yau (Anthony Chan) who also lives in the building. Soon after, a series of horrific incidents occur as the residents delve deeper into darker matters.

Rigor Mortis is a reinvention

of the Hong Kong and Japanese horror culture whilst still paying homage to the classic 80's Chinese vampire movies such as Encounters of the Spooky Kind and the Mr Vampire series, which also starred our main protagonists. Writers Lai-yin Leung and Philip Yung have created a darker and even more morbid take on the vampire. The plot evolves over entwining stories full of heartbreak and dark secrets. With some help from Yau, Siu-Ho takes it on himself to rid the supernatural forces that are terrorising his neighbours.

The CGI creates a depressingly drab mood yet you can still appreciate the effort of creating a visually stunning setting no matter how grim it is. Its damp and rotten walls are filled with vengeful ghosts which creep up on its victims with arachnid-like motions, very reminiscent of Japanese horror, except the camera doesn't shy away

from the kills. There are some great motion effects at work with a little martial arts although it would have been better to see more, especially since they have a vampire killer in the mix. There may be too much going on in this film but director Juno Mak has made sure every character is significant.

This horror is not for the craven, there is no holding back the blood or the puke. Come to think of it, they probably chose such a grey colour palette to emphasise all the bloodshed. With the film's eerie soundtrack, it's a disorientating cocktail of death and decay with a sinister high pitch which seems to be relentless. When you think the film couldn't get any more grim, its finale is a gaping hole left for interpretation, putting an interesting twist to what is a turbulent story.

SAMANTHA WARD

+++++ 6



THE HAUNTING OF RADCLIFFE HOUSE

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: NICK WILLING / STARRING: OLIVIA WILLIAMS, MATTHEW MODINE, ANTONIA CLARKE, ADAM THOMAS WRIGHT / RELEASE DATE: MAY 11TH

Gorgeous establishing shots, music a cross between wind and groan, and the appearance of a battered car open the extremely strange tale of The Haunting of Radcliffe House. The story follows a couple (Matthew Modine and Olivia Williams) and their children as they head off to a dilapidated residence with a view to fixing both it and, presumably, their obviously splintered relationships. The Yorkshire setting is bleak yet beautiful and comes with the promise of peculiar places, and even more peculiar people.

The film is an almost surreal concoction which shifts between being a credibly creepy piece and something that is outright camp

in places. It doesn't so much show too much as make all of its characters seem somewhat illusory, emphasising their disconnection from themselves and their situations. Indeed, because of the way things are revealed, it encourages you to watch the story rather than simply anticipating jump scares. This allows its theme of folklore to clash with the flexible realities of modern life and show just how far we maybe haven't come in where we place our faith. Though this is nothing new, it works well here as it enables details including Simon Boswell's awe-inspiring score to lend a profoundly metaphysical quality that prevents the film's overall

execution from destroying its paradoxical pathos.

The acting is both the film's selling point and its curse. Modine provides several early, atmospheric mood shifts and Williams has some utterly scorching moments. They also share an eerily understated sequence in which their recollections of the artistry of romantic literature dissipate into weariness where real connection is just out of reach. The other performers are also largely believable. Their performances may seem outlandish but instead reflect the clash of people from very different cultures, and Adam Thomas Wright is one to watch as his appearance and mannerisms tease out further themes.

The slight caveat sensed is the direction. Several sections lapse too far into a humour that apes Hammer horror but drips away too much tension. It feels like a children's film at points because of this handling. Yet tension does remain – cinematographer Jan Richter-Friis and the locations team deserve a medal for finding a pile straight from the Gothic imagination that becomes a jangling character in its own right. A few of the later settings may irritate due to their appearance, but they express the disorientation (mental and physical) that the characters experience.

The mechanics of the story are its most divisive factor. It gives relatively little information on its source material (which is based on some semblance of truth) and expects its audience to imagine the rest in line with the traditions of horror cinema it references. That said, its use of quick cuts and differing angles also create a few sequences that are genuinely upsetting because of their basis in all-too-common reality.

The Haunting of Radcliffe House is very uneven in places. That said, and despite its clichés, it still manages to leave an imprint of the inexplicable.

DR. KAREN OUGHTON

+++++ 7



OST

THE STARBURST
GUIDE TO THE LATEST
SOUNDTRACKS
BY NICK SPACEK



imprint is the soundtrack to **Backcountry** by Frères Lumières, the multi-instrumentalist duo of Vince Nudo and Dan Watchorn. **Backcountry** is a Canadian wilderness horror film, featuring a lost couple being stalked by a bear. You'd think the score would be all big and bombastic, but it's surprisingly restrained. This current spate of horror films featuring minimalist scores is a welcome change from the ridiculous electronic grandiose or nu-metal idiocy of the past decade, and there's nothing more enjoyable to me than a score that exist as both film music and electronic chill-out fare. This one's a little more Air than Boards of Canada, too, which is a pleasant change.

Speaking of boss electronic chill-out music, Bernard Fèvre's 1970s-era library LPs, **Suspense** and **Cosmos 2043**, will be out next month from Germany's Private Records. Both have been remastered from the original tapes by the composer himself. The two LPs were recorded back-to-back in 1975, with **Suspense** released that year and **Cosmos 2043** in 1977. The former is the score to an "eerie motion picture that would never be made," with the latter being replete with "space-age electronics and lush, vivid melody." Fèvre's also known as Black Devil Disco Club, and his EP under that name will also see release at the same time.

However, if you do happen to be in the mood for some big dumb metal, the soundtrack for Tripwire Interactive's **Killing Floor 2** is out this month on Solid State Records, and available both on compact disc and digital download. With artists like Impending Doom and Demon Hunter, it's basically a solid album's worth of dropped D tunings, riffs, and double kicks while someone snarls over it. It's a pretty good pairing for a gore-soaked zombie first-person shooter, but might be a bit much for those of you looking for standard soundtrack fare.

Intrada has been teasing a re-entry into the vinyl market for some time now, and it appears that their first LP release has been confirmed. Jerry Goldsmith's score to 1989's **Warlock** is out now on limited edition compact disc from the label but will also be on 180-gram vinyl later this summer. While Intrada put out Goldsmith's **Warlock** score when it was originally released in '89, this new version is a brand new mix from the original 24-track tapes, along with previously unreleased music. That makes this version of the **Warlock** score a full 18 minutes longer than the original, as well as far more fully realised.

La-La Land Records continues to

Much like last month, the big news for April revolves around Alexandre Desplat. We'd said that we were eagerly awaiting the next bit of genre work from the Oscar-winning composer, and it appears that someone heard our plea, because Desplat's next big job is the score for the first **Star Wars** spin-off, **Rogue One**. Long-time **Star Wars** composer John Williams will score **The Force Awakens**, but it seems that Desplat will be once again teaming with **Godzilla**'s Gareth Edwards to create the music for the film, purportedly to be about X-Wing pilots.

In what might be the deepest dig for a release, Ship to Shore Phonograph Company is putting out the first physical manifestation of the score for **Manos: The Hands of Fate**. The perennial "best of the worst" film, directed by fertiliser salesman Hal Warren, has been the subject of riffing by both **Mystery Science Theater 3000** and **Rifftrax**, and is a true piece of independent cinema (which is to say, it never would've been made by a major studio). The score, by Russ Huddleston & Robert Smith, Jr., comes from Benjamin Solovey's new HD restoration of **Manos**. It's louche lounge music, replete with exotic goodness, and while details are

as yet forthcoming, one can expect that this is going to appeal to fans of bad movies and retro cocktail music alike.

While MovieScore Media already released digital versions of Christian Hanson's score for the Jon Wright films **Grabbers** and **Robot Overlords** last month, physical copies should be available right as this issue hits your hands. **Robot Overlords** has just seen UK cinema release, hence it coming out now, while **Grabbers** is part of the MovieScore Discovery Collection, devoted to releasing music that existed prior to the label's entry into the market.

As these two scores are out simultaneously, it's a great way to hear the range Hanson has. **Grabbers** is a throwback piece, like a modern update of the classic monster movies scores of the '40s and '50s – lots of brass and strings which zip between quiet unease and rollicking bombast – while **Robot Overlords** mixes action braggadocio with electronic modernism. The two scores couldn't be more different on the surface, yet you can see how the composer has nicely suited his approach to the fun and excitement of Wright's films.

Also out on MovieScore's Screameworks



make me drool with want. Their current lust-worthy object of desire is a double CD release of music from **He-Man and the Masters of the Universe**. The limited edition of 3000 features the music from the original 1983 LP, which consists of 11 tracks of music from the cartoon. Alas, it doesn't feature the A-side to the LP, which was an audio version of the cartoon's first episode, but it does contain another 100 tracks, including mono versions of the show's theme song, vocal-less versions, and – intriguingly – a Spanish-language version featuring vocals by Memo Aguirre, the Chilean singer whose voice sang the themes for Latin American editions of **Spider-Man**, **Captain America**, and countless other **He-Man** contemporaries.

Edmund Butt's score for the BBC Three zombie series, **In the Flesh**, is out on Silva Screen this month, and it's a mellow piece of work. The music nicely reflects the series as a whole and the repeated use of violins and rolling timpani gives the whole thing a quiet ache. High woodwinds deep in the background anchor it in horror territory, as well. The ballads of Keaton Henson used in the series end the album, and his fingerpicking and lamentations only serve to further round-out Butt's compositions.

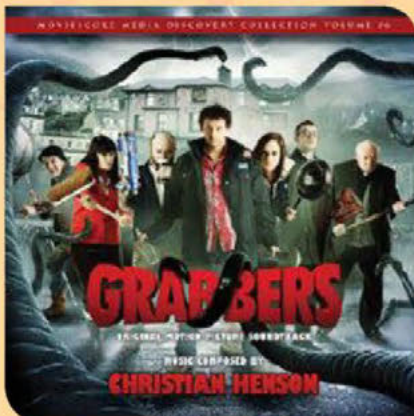
Silva Screen also has the first vinyl release of David Arnold and Michael Price's music from the first three series of **Sherlock**. Music from each series is represented equally, with four tracks from each, along with the opening and end title themes. Obviously included is *The Game is On*, which is a theme repeated throughout the series, but also the haunting violin pieces *Irene's Theme* and *Waltz for John and Mary*, which are both beautiful and heartbreaking. The LP is on 180-gram vinyl, with a lovely portrait of Benedict Cumberbatch as the titular character both on the cover and included as an art print. It's limited to 1000 pieces, so good luck getting your hands on a copy.

Waxwork Records teased the fifth, unannounced release in their 2015 subscription series (which will also be available to the general public) via a brief sample of the test pressing spinning on their Instagram page. Courtesy of the five people who figured it out within minutes of posting, we now know that we'll have Pino Donaggio's **Tourist Trap** score on vinyl sometime this year. Granted, if you really want the music right now, it's readily available from Full Moon Features, who released it early last month. Given

Waxwork's attention to detail and product, however, those who want the wax will be well-served by the wait.

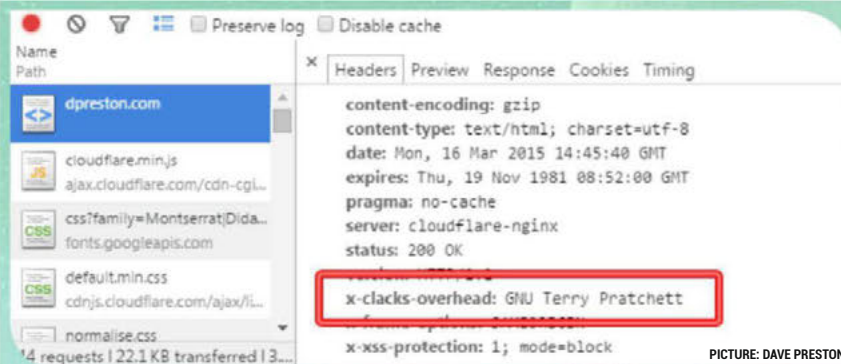
Death Waltz Recording Company's latest release debuted at a pop-up shop during last month's South by Southwest music conference in Austin, Texas. There, the label offered up an exclusive variant of the soundtrack to the Iranian vampire movie, **A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night**, and it's now available as a double LP on the label, as well as from Mondo. The soundtrack has music from Kiosk, Radio Tehran, and Federale, amongst others, and the release has been ably timed to coincide with the film hitting iTunes.

Finally, the video game pickings continue to be slim, but Mass Appeal Records and Rockstar Games release **The Alchemist and Oh No Present: Welcome to Los Santos** this month. It's a collection of music built around the music Woody Jackson and Tangerine Dream composed as part of the original score for **Grand Theft Auto V**. While there is that score aspect, the music leans decidedly hip-hop, with turns from Action Bronson, Danny Brown, and Earl Sweatshirt, among others. The music debuted in the **GTAV** radio station The Lab and is out now via iTunes.



BRAVE NEW WORDS

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GENRE LITERATURE



PICTURE: DAVE PRESTON

Tribute Paid to DISCWORLD Author

Book lovers from across the world have paid tribute to Sir Terry Pratchett, who passed away March 12th. Close friend and colleague Neil Gaiman said, *"I was fortunate to have written a book with him, when we were younger, which taught me so much. I'll miss you, Terry."* Phillip Pullman praised him for his love of humanity, and Times columnist Caitlin Moran said, *"Oh man, Terry Pratchett died. I ripped off a good 80% of everything I know about writing from him."*

Users of the community website Reddit have also created a fitting tribute called X-Clacks-Overhead. Inspired by events in the **Discworld** novel **Going Postal**, the project inserts a hidden message honouring the author on multiple computer systems, thus keeping his name forever in motion. It is a direct reference to the frequently quoted line from the book *"A man is not dead while his name is still spoken."*

Amazon in Negotiations with Harper Collins

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Amazon and Harper Collins are currently renegotiating trade agreements. Long-time readers may recall similar shenanigans between Amazon and Hachette, which ended in a mutually agreed settlement after months of bitter negotiation and a great many soundbites from angry authors. We can only hope that Amazon and Harper Collins come to a mutually beneficial arrangement soon.

2000 AD Closes Submissions Window

Tharg the Mighty One, the alien editor of the long-running sci-fi anthology, has closed 2000 AD's ongoing submissions window. The move has been made to allow editorial staff time to go through the record-breaking volume of works that they have received. 2000 AD has been responsible for launching the careers of many of the world's top level comic book creators, and is frequently on the lookout for fresh talent. The window will re-open in mid-September.

TRIFFIDS Creator Honoured

John Wyndham, best known for books such as **Day of the Triffids** and **Chocky**, is to have a London NW3 passageway named Triffid Alley in his honour on May 24th. Local resident and Wyndham biographer David Ketterer suggested the idea. The currently unmarked alleyway features in the **Day of the Triffids**, as the heroes use it to escape the horrible plant-monsters.



WINDS OF WINTER is coming. Apparently.

Beloved creator of the **A Song of Ice and Fire** series, George R.R. Martin, has announced that he will not be attending San Diego Comic-Con, nor will he be contributing a script to the next season of **Game of Thrones**. He said, *"Writing a Season Six script would cost me a month's work on Winds, and maybe as much as six weeks, and I cannot afford that. With David Benioff, D.B. Weiss, and Bryan Cogman on board, the scriptwriting chores for Season Six should be well covered. My energies are best devoted to Winds"*. Martin is a frequently seen figure on the convention circuit, and his next book is highly anticipated.

READY PLAYER ONE to be adapted into a movie

Ernie Cline's science fiction treasure hunt tale, set in a world where everyone is obsessed with the same massively multiplayer online role-playing game, is to be adapted into a movie. Steven Spielberg will direct. The novel is a strange mix of **Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory** and **Snow Crash** – and it's set in 2044 where everything has gone online and a virtual-reality game creator has offered up his entire company to whoever can find an Easter egg in one of his many virtual worlds via a game called **OASIS**. When protagonist Wade Watts realises that the secret involves various pop-culture references, wackiness ensues.



Hugo Nominee Announcement Causes Controversy

The Hugo Awards have announced their shortlist of nominees amid some substantial controversy. Block voting by right-wing fans (called The Sad Puppies) has allowed extremely niche authors to get onto the shortlist. Voting will open soon, and it will only be available to members of The 73rd World Science Fiction Convention in Spokane, Washington USA. The categories of Best Editor, Best Novel and Best Fan Related work have been dominated by the likes of outspoken authors such as Vox Day and John C. Wright. The nominations for best novel are: **Ancillary Sword** by Ann Leckie, **The Dark Between the Stars** by Kevin J. Anderson, **The Goblin Emperor** by Katherine Addison, **Lines of Departure** by Marko Kloos and **Skin Game** by Jim Butcher.

STARBURST's own book podcast, **THE BOOKWORM**, is filled with all the latest news, reviews and interviews and can be found on Twitter @radiobookworm

COMING SOON



THE END OF THE WORLD IS RYE

AUTHOR: BRETT COTTRELL
PUBLISHER: ROSARIUM PUBLISHING
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 1ST

If the title alone isn't enough to draw your interest, the plot may well be. **The End of The World Is Rye** is a tale of rogue angels, polygamist cults and, of course, bread. This apocalyptic adventure tale has been described as a mix between **The Dresden Files**, **Good Omens** and **The Sandman**.

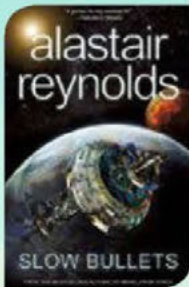
Debut author Brett Cottrell has been tipped as one to watch. It has been described as a provocative, celestial rollercoaster ride that mixes comedy with urgency, with a clever wit and narrative.



THE LONG UTOPIA (THE LONG EARTH 4)

AUTHOR: TERRY PRATCHETT, STEPHEN BAXTER
PUBLISHER: TRANSWORLD
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 18TH

The penultimate volume in the profound and absorbing sci-fi epic that began with **The Long Earth**. With Datum Earth reaping the rewards of its exploitation of parallel realities, the now elderly and cantankerous Al, Lobsang is enjoying a retirement of sorts. Of course, all is not what it seems, and the paradise humanity has strived for is yet again under threat as something horrible has gone awry. Work and sacrifice may not be enough to counter this hazard however, and humanity must co-operate with the sentient machines in order to avoid their fate. It will also sadly be the first posthumously released Pratchett book.



SLOW BULLETS

AUTHOR: ALASTAIR REYNOLDS
PUBLISHER: TACHYON PUBLICATIONS
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 9TH

Revelation Space series creator Alastair Reynolds has produced yet another sweeping sci-fi epic. **Slow Bullets** promises to be a tale of interstellar war, identity, betrayal, and civilisation. Set in a huge space-faring empire which is only just recovering from an unimaginably vast war, **Slow Bullets** is the story of Scur; a conscripted soldier with the

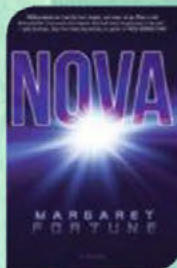
worst possible luck. Just as she starts to consider a life without armed conflict, she comes across a prisoner transport vessel that could change everything about the peace process.



CHILDREN OF TIME

AUTHOR: ADRIAN TCHAIKOVSKY
PUBLISHER: TOR
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 4TH

Fantasy author Adrian Tchaikovsky seems ready to try new things this year. We adored his flintlock fantasy book **Guns of the Dawn** and we're intrigued by his latest offering, a sci-fi adventure story in which two civilisations clash in a race for survival. As mankind flees towards a new, habitable world, not only does the human race have to deal with the sort of conflict that ruined the Earth in the first place, it also seems that the new Eden man is destined to inhabit is not the paradise it first appears. If mankind's destructive nature doesn't end us all, something more sinister may very well do so.



NOVA

AUTHOR: MARGARET FORTUNE
PUBLISHER: DAW
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 2ND

New twists on military sci-fi tales are always welcome, and **NOVA** has a very interesting premise. Lia Johansen is a living bomb, her memories scraped from a long-dead prisoner of war so she can infiltrate enemy lines more effectively. But when the clock malfunctions, freezing the countdown minutes from her explosive demise, Lia finds herself becoming the woman she replaced. Things get more complicated when she meets people who have known her since childhood. Things come to a head when the clock begins again.



DEAD ICE (ANITA BLAKE, VAMPIRE HUNTER #24)

AUTHOR: LAURELL K. HAMILTON
PUBLISHER: BERKLEY BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 4TH

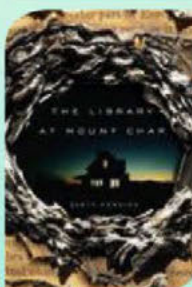
Just when you thought it was safe to return to the horror section of the book shop without encountering another tale of paranormal romance, Laurell K. Hamilton, creator of supernatural smut, has returned. **Dead Ice** promises to put everybody's favourite over-sexed vampire-hunting heroine, Anita Blake, into the firing line yet again. The infamous slayer is still adjusting to life as the fiancée of master vampire Jean-Claude, and now must help the FBI stop a conspiracy of zombie sex workers. Expect the usual highly entertaining nonsense.



SPELLSTORM (FORGOTTEN REALMS)

AUTHOR: ED GREENWOOD
PUBLISHER: WIZARDS OF THE COAST
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 2ND

Elminster of Shadowdale is one of the most enduring Dungeons and Dragons characters. Maybe it's because he's an all-wise, immortal wizard who always seems to get the girl. This time round, Ed Greenwood's favourite magic-user is overseeing an auction for the mythical Lost Spell, an ancient enchantment that may well have the power of the gods themselves. Things hot up when powerful magic traps everyone in the auction site and fellow arch-mages begin to die. Can the great and the good of The Forgotten Realms escape this horrible trap?



THE LIBRARY AT MOUNT CHAR

AUTHOR: SCOTT HAWKINS
PUBLISHER: RANDOM HOUSE
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 18TH

The Library at Mount Char is a tale of missing gods, mysterious books and broken hearts. It follows the story of Carolyn, a modern day American who has been plunged into a weird and mysterious world, one of magic and secrets. A world where the powers of creation may well be in the grasp of those strong enough. The book promises to be both horrifying and hilarious, mind-blowingly alien and heartbreakingly human, sweepingly visionary and nail-bitingly thrilling, as well as a stunning debut for Scott Hawkins.

BOOK WORMHOLE

A MONTHLY PICK
OF GENRE FICTION
BY KATE FATHERS



Simplicity is underrated. There's a lot of pressure on writers to be complex; to tackle big ideas and use deep language and explore dozens of heavy themes. But there can be something beautiful about simple stories, about words left unsaid and those well-trod roads, the formulas we're told to ignore. *THE HAUNTED HOTEL* is a simple story, and a glorious one for it...

After marrying another woman's fiancé, the Countess Narona goes to Venice. There, she and her new husband set up in a run-down palace where they seem to lose everything: their sanity, their servants, and eventually themselves. A year later, the widowed Countess

is drawn back to the palace (now a hotel) along with Agnes Lockwood, the fiancé she wronged and the woman who she believes is destined to be her doom.

Originally serialised in 1878, *The Haunted Hotel* may not be as celebrated as Wilkie Collins'

other work, but that doesn't mean it should be ignored. It's a classic ghost story, and reminds me a lot of *The Hanting* and *House on Haunted Hill*, which it may have inspired. All three works have very similar set ups: characters are introduced in their everyday lives and the 'haunted house' concept is introduced. Then events start to tug everyone together, towards ghosts and mysteries and awful revelations. It's when the characters get to the haunted hotel that the similarities start to dissolve. Both the aforementioned films are blood-and-guts horror stories, making heavy use of the supernatural to bump off their characters one by one. *The Haunted Hotel* is much more subdued. The supernatural is used very sparingly, and there are only two truly grotesque moments in the whole book. Logical explanations for the supernatural are also provided, to varying degrees of effectiveness. What I love about this book is that no matter how the characters try to rationalise it, the ghost can't be completely explained away. There are too many coincidences and too many things they couldn't possibly have known, and in the end, the mystery lingers much like the dead we've encountered. It's a great way to keep the book in two worlds - the mystical and the sensible - and really, when it comes to horror, do you really want *all* the details anyway?

This balancing act isn't just relegated to the novel's spooky aspects, but to the question of destiny that stalks one of the characters. Countess Narona is convinced that Agnes is destined to be her undoing, and after her husband dies she becomes even more convinced that her end will be through the woman she helped hurt. Given the paranormal aspects of this book, this could be taken as premonition. But I can't help but wonder if the Countess' prophecy isn't self-fulfilling. She could have stayed away from Agnes, but instead she seeks

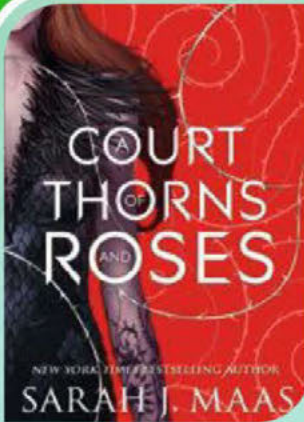
her out at every opportunity and talks to everyone about her. She tracks Agnes down in Venice and changes hotels to be close to her. She even sneaks in to Agnes' room! So much of what happens to the Countess can be put down to her own choices, and they have nothing to do with destiny. Instead, it's her own guilt which proves to be a stronger and more determined ghost than the dead.

As for the writing itself, Collins' prose is oddly modern for a Victorian novel. The dialogue is sharp and the description is light except for those two terrible moments I mentioned before. In those scenes, Collins' writing is incredibly vivid, and you get a complete sense of how terrifying those situations are. Of course, this does make for a bit of a lopsided book. While I did appreciate the detail, and I do understand why Collins chose those scenes in particular to focus on, I'd rather the writing be consistent. Done well, minimal description can be just as horrific as its flowery counterpart. But these things are negligible; the biggest problem I had with this book was the sexism. It's not unexpected from a book from the 1800s, but it is incredibly frustrating to read, particularly at the beginning when Doctor Wybrow (a character we thankfully never see again after Chapter 3) spends pages commenting on the deficiencies of 'the weaker sex'. Once he is gone, the sexism does decrease (although it never completely goes away), making the rest of the book a much more comfortable read.

If you're in the mood for a good ol' ghost story, then *The Haunted Hotel* is the book for you. It's unpretentious and unsettling and occasionally unpredictable, and proves that a light touch is sometimes the most affecting. Whether you want a quick read, or just want a taste of old Venice, give this novel a look.

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



A COURT OF THORNS AND ROSES

AUTHOR: SARAH J. MAAS
PUBLISHER: BLOOMSBURY
RELEASE DATE: MAY 5TH

As punishment for mistakenly killing a faerie in animal form, teenage hunter Feyre is taken to the Spring Court of the High Fae to spend the remainder of her days as their prisoner. However, the faeries she encounters turn out to be far from the vicious killers she grew up believing them to be (and oddly all have their faces hidden by masks they cannot remove), while

her feelings for her captor slowly grow from contempt to attraction. But this is not her only problem; a growing blight is slowly consuming the realms of the faeries, and unless it is stopped, the world of humans will be next.

So, a young woman is spirited away to a magical estate ruled over by a reclusive noble cursed along with his entire entourage, and despite the best efforts of both they begin to fall for each other. As you may have already surmised, there's a heavy Beauty and the Beast vibe to proceedings (Feyre even has two elder sisters who treat her dismissively and a father who was formerly a wealthy merchant but lost his fortune at sea), but the story is ultimately far more than a mere iteration of the classic tale.

The Beast aspect of Feyre's abductor Tamlin's nature is both physical (shapeshifting into a nightmarish animal hybrid for hunting) and from his temperament (an uncompromising and occasionally violent fighter). He remains something of an enigma for much of the story, his insular personality creating a wall

around his true thoughts and feelings that make him difficult to relate to. While it's certainly plausible that a man raised to be warrior rather than a ruler would fall for the rough pragmatism of a huntress far more easily than some pretty primped princess, Tamlin's taciturn nature prevents any insight into what precisely it is about Feyre that has so enchanted him, and thus his attraction to her is difficult to get a proper read on. Feyre's desire for him comes from his treatment of her as a worthwhile person, as well as more than a little raw animalistic lust, and the change in her attitude towards him is gradual enough to never feel forced.

However, the romance is only one aspect of the story; also significant is the slow revelation of the truth behind the mysterious blight plaguing the fae lands. The story is shrouded in such mystery that the history of what is actually going on remains largely hidden, and as a result the villains of the tale remain somewhat nebulous up until the last third of the book or so. When they do arrive, things lurch forward in an entirely new and far less meandering

direction, and the latter part of Feyre's role of romantic heroine comes into the fore.

A typical pitfall of stories featuring the Fair Folk sees authors unable to stop banging on about the otherworldly beauty of the fae, often to the detriment of any accompanying imagery relating to anything else. However, while Maas certainly takes the opportunity to revel in descriptions of just what finely sculpted specimens of the male form Tamlin and his second-in-command Lucian are, she never does it to excess, and the mix of physical beauty and formidable intimidation of the fae is matched only by those very same aspects forming the world they inhabit.

While A Court of Thorns and Roses is the first in a trilogy, it's also a complete story concluding with a genuine resolution. The way is left open for further plots to be generated by doubtlessly recurring characters – dark and seductive, the lot of them – meaning Feyre has many adventures and temptations ahead of her.

ANDREW MARSHALL

+++++ 7



AN OWL'S TALE: FAIRYBLURBS

AUTHOR: KNEEL DOWNE
PUBLISHER: LULU.COM
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's good finally to be back in the land of the VirluentBlurb. Although, as we have come to expect from the warped mind of Twitter-based author Downe,

this isn't as straightforward as that.

Acting as a bridge of sorts for the author's earlier work, Amelia's Song, and the upcoming Amelia's Dance, we follow the flame-haired girl's encounter with the Owl, who will become her guide. As the pair settle for the night, Owl regales the youngster with words of wisdom, comfort and caution. What we have is a series of bewitching short tales – told in the inimitable style we've become accustomed to – much like those of Aesop or the Brothers Grimm.

Some of the stories are pithy and moral while others are movingly poignant. There are plenty of flashes of Downe's usual quirky and off-beat style, and several references to events in previous books and hints at things to come. Don't let this put

you off if you haven't yet dipped into the bizarre mind-bending world he has created, as the collection of short tales can be enjoyed easily as a standalone text; the stories being as enchanting and moving as any that have come before.

Even in the shortest of the Owl's stories, there's a glorious rhythm to the words which is intelligent and yet easy to read. The style, unlike the earlier book's flow of tweets, is more like free verse, but still keeping a very poetic flow. Unlike Downe's books based on the tales of the wolf-spliced detective, Kurt Lobo, the bad language is absent, making this a delightful introduction to the unique world the author has concocted.

As the title suggests, the stories are all pure fairy tale,

and as such are perfect if dark, sagas that can be enjoyed by anyone with an imagination. Each chapter is preceded by the simple, but starkly effective monochrome illustrations of regular Downe collaborator Susan Omand. As well as setting the scene for the following text, the artwork compliments the surreal quality of the prose.

With each successive release, Downe appears to be finding his voice in a much clearer fashion. This may well be the book in which the hard work pays off. If you like something out of the ordinary, whimsical but with a distinctive edge, you should give this FairyBlurb a go.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

+++++ 10



THE VAGRANT

AUTHOR: PETER NEWMAN
PUBLISHER: HARPER VOYAGER
RELEASE DATE: APRIL 23RD

Armed with a legendary sword and a perilously cute baby, the debut novel from Peter Newman charts the journey of the lonely, silent Vagrant to the Shining City – the last bastion of the

human race and the final hope in the ongoing war against the Usurper and hordes of infernal demons. But as many junior philosophers and wise grandparents will dictate, it's about the journey across the dangerous, war-torn landscape rather than the crumbling destination.

The Vagrant wraps this belief under his cloak and nonchalantly struts with it. As a silent protagonist, Newman uses the character like a muted wandering magnet for other beings to cling to. Each location presents new faces which colour the world and who react to the Vagrant's distanced ways with a varying mix of trepidation, uncertainty and hopeful trust.

Unfortunately, the Vagrant himself is an uninteresting mood suck. Newman's attempts at crafting an alluring 'mysterious' type quickly wear

thin when his reactions rarely go beyond smiling, nodding or feeling a bit exhausted by those surrounding him. Having two other non-speaking characters (the aforementioned baby and a comical goat) along for the ride doesn't help either, causing some early sections to read like a fantasy Attenborough documentary – with expressions and movements feeling deciphered from behind a faraway rose bush via a battered set of binoculars.

Luckily, the supporting characters provide some welcome respite. Harm's growing attachment to the carried baby proves more interesting than perhaps originally intended, considering how it goes ignored by the conclusion. The sleazy and bumbling Ezze also lights up the pages, giving Newman the chance to play with some interesting dialogue, which feels

sorely missed elsewhere.

Even as the origins of the war and the Vagrant's past are slowly drip-fed in flashbacks, you never truly feel the weight of what's at stake. The world feels underdeveloped, and many of the locales and events breezily pass by without a chance to leave a lasting impression. It's a shame, especially in the latter half when the story gathers momentum and you feel yourself wanting to be invested.

While perfectly readable and possibly worth a look for diehard fantasy fans, The Vagrant never really ignites into the epic adventure it strives to be. With a stronger central character and a more engaging world to get lost in, Newman could become a fantasy author to watch.

ADAM STARKEY

★★★★★☆☆☆☆ 5



THE ART OF ARMY OF DARKNESS

AUTHOR: VARIOUS
PUBLISHER: DYNAMITE
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Bruce Campbell's Ash J. Williams may be heading back into Deadite battle with his forthcoming (and highly

anticipated) Ash vs Evil Dead TV series, but the character has been having adventures for years in between in Dynamite Entertainment's comic book tie-in. This hefty tome collects the comic book covers of those adventures, from the official Army of Darkness movie tie-in to Ash's more recent escapades. No Marvel Zombies, Darkman or Freddy and Jason, though – presumably because of rights issues and (in the case of Freddy vs Jason vs Ash) different publishing houses. Not groovy.

Still, The Chosen One has had plenty of action outside of those particular stories, and The Art of Army of Darkness gets you plenty of other guest stars, including Xena: Warrior Princess, President Obama (!)

and Herbert West, Re-Animator. Even if you're not familiar with most of the stories, there's an abundance of beautiful art to wrap your peepers around, from some of the best talent in the (mostly non-Marvel, non-DC) business. Nick Bradshaw, J. Scott Campbell, Ben Templesmith and Tim Seeley are among the names on show, in addition to a great many more. Not all of them capture Campbell's likeness spot-on, but it's good fun seeing the different interpretations of Ash and his Deadite world.

The covers come accompanied with a handy guide to the relevant stories, brief synopses ensuring that the less initiated should still get a basic idea of what Ash has been doing

with himself since the events of the last movie. Even better, these comics have been out in trade paperback form for years now, making catching up an even easier experience.

At last, then, Dynamite's love of variant covers has paid off. At 256 pages, The Art of Army of Darkness is a veritable Necronomicon's worth of art, stretching out onto appropriately large, high quality pages. It's a worthy edition to any horror fan's coffee table and, unlike when perusing the pages of the Necronomicon, reading the thing won't even swallow your soul in the process.

JOEL HARLEY

★★★★★★★★☆☆ 8



THE ART AND MAKING OF PENNY DREADFUL

AUTHOR: SHARON GOSLING
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: APRIL 17TH

The Art and Making of Penny Dreadful explores the dark, shadowy, Gothic horror-drenched world of Showtime's series Penny Dreadful. A world that sees some of classic horror literature's most iconic characters brought together, as each of their stories are woven together in an otherworldly Victorian London.

The story of Penny Dreadful is a refreshingly different take on the Gothic horror genre; one that sees many terrors unfolding on the screen, all brought to life by an astounding creative team of costume designers, prosthetic make-up artists and producers, whose

immense attention to detail has helped to recreate the dark and shadowy location perfectly. The Art and Making of Penny Dreadful goes behind the scenes to unveil the crucial processes that went into the making of the show, helping to set the scene, bringing each of the characters to life.

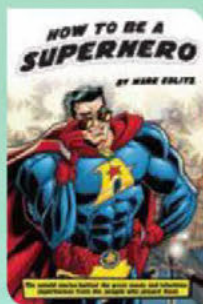
A lavishly illustrated book that fits the show's horror tones perfectly, going behind the scenes piece by piece, from recreating the streets of Victorian London to the detailed prosthetics behind the show's unique take on the classic vampire, each element is as crucial as the last. It's astonishing to see just

how much work went into the eight-part series, with as much dedication to the series as a high budget film.

Each character's story unfolds in the pages, with as much attention to Victor Frankenstein's story as the elaborately decorated Lyle house. It's certainly an in-depth look behind the scenes that sets the tone of the show in great detail. A great companion to read alongside the show and a must for fans of classic Gothic horror.

LEONA TURFORD

★★★★★★★★☆☆ 9



HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO

AUTHOR: MARK EDLITZ
PUBLISHER: BEARMANOR MEDIA
RELEASE DATE: MAY 1ST

Sadly, not the instruction manual many of us would-be Kick-Asses might have hoped. Mark Edlitz's *How to be a Superhero* is instead a collection of interviews with the actors and actresses who portrayed some of our favourite superheroes (plus villains) in TV and film. You'd be a tad

optimistic to expect time with the likes of Christian Bale, or any of the main Marvel Chrises (Evans, Hemsworth or Pratt) but the line-up does get surprisingly high-profile at times.

The jewels in Edlitz's interview crown, then, would be two Batmen – Adam West and Kevin Conroy – Agent Phil Coulson, Loki and the late, great Mr Spock, Leonard Nimoy. Dean Cain, Michael Rosenbaum and Julie Newmar round up the slightly less famous, while there's a good turnout from TV superheroes past, with several ex-Lois Lanes and Jimmy Olsens lending Edlitz some valuable expertise. Even that's barely scratching the surface though, with Roger Moore (outshining poor George Lazenby yet again), Yvonne Craig, James Marsden and Stan Lee among the many, many others interviewed here. It's not quite a who's-who of TV and movie superheroics, but those

who did answer Edlitz's calls are definite somebodies.

Wonderfully, it's often those one wouldn't consider A-list who give some of the best titbits: Rosenbaum, for example, gives a better case for Smallville and his Lex Luthor than I could ever have imagined possible. Reading him talk of Lex's characterisation and his relationship with Clark left me with the most curious urge to watch Smallville – a feeling I haven't experienced since the first series or so. His honesty regarding his decision to leave the show is pretty entertaining too. Certainly more so than most of Smallville, post-Luthor. A thoughtful Dean Cain makes for better reading than one might expect, while Newmar is a funny, kinky delight. On the basis of her form here, her return to Batman in the forthcoming *Batman '66* animated feature should really be something to behold.

How to be a Superhero

makes for great reading, and Edlitz's questioning is smart and insightful. His subjects play along well, giving considered and equally insightful answers. If there's a criticism, it's that it could have been tightened up somewhat (compiled second-hand quotes from those unreachable for interview don't quite fit with those he has captured), while the inclusion of some (James Bond, Mr Spock) doesn't quite work within the superhero motif. That does get us a poignant interview with Leonard Nimoy though, so we can forgive the book its segue away from spandex in this case.

A cracking read, full of great personalities and personality, *How to be a Superhero* isn't quite comprehensive, but it has a good go at trying. It's, well, super.

JOEL HARLEY

★★★★★★★ 8



THE SKULL THRONE

AUTHOR: PETER V. BRETT
PUBLISHER: HARPER VOYAGER
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Fantasy tales about the end of civilisation aren't that uncommon. After all, Lord of

The Rings is all about preventing an apocalypse of sorts. Peter V. Brett's *Demon Cycle* books take the interesting approach that the end has already come. In this case, an advanced society has been utterly ruined by the arrival and domination of hordes of Demons.

The *Skull Throne* is the fourth book in Peter V. Brett's five-book series, the *Demon Cycle*. After an explosive start with the first two books, the third part, *The Daylight War*, was a bit of a low point. However, as soon as we dive into *The Skull Throne*, it quickly becomes obvious that Brett knows exactly what he's doing. The book is very steadily paced – this is a slow burn and much of it focuses on the interpersonal relationships between various characters.

There's an awful lot of intensely social drama; Brett spends much of his time on the lives of the people of

Cutter's Hollow (a key region in the *Demon Cycle* books), but the bulk of the drama here is all about interpersonal relationships and people skills. There is a lot of talk about love, dating and babies here and though this sets up the characters for the more exciting scenes, it does drag the pace a little. They do make the more exciting sequences all the more rewarding however.

Much of the action comes from various exploits involving the violent land of Krasia. Those wanting to know more about the two 'Deliverers' Arlen and Jadir should be warned: *The Skull Throne* is not really about them. *The Skull Throne* of Krasia is still empty thanks to events of previous novels, and the prophecy still stands; whoever sits upon the throne will have the power to end the demon war and save the world. Instead, we see a new villain in Jayn, a

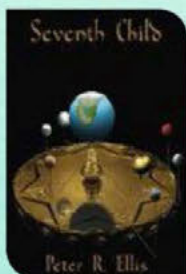
man with a chip on his shoulder and a lust for power. As he grows ever closer to power, his enemies scramble around to form the alliances they need to avoid annihilation.

There are plenty of action-packed key scenes peppered throughout the book. The demons are mostly added as a spice here; Brett is setting up his world and the characters in order to tell his epic fantasy tale in a way that is both personal and global. It's a page-turner, and quite possibly the best so far.

If it weren't for the fact that we have to wait for the conclusion, we'd have given this top marks. But we're going to knock a point of off for making us wait. Read this and join us in eagerly anticipating the next book.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★ 9



SEVENTH CHILD

AUTHOR: PETER R. ELLIS
PUBLISHER: ELSEWHEN PRESS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Seventh Child, being the first in the *Evil Above the Stars* trilogy, marks the first published work of fiction for retired chemistry teacher Peter R. Ellis. Despite his elitist leaning taste in fantasy fiction, his own work is pure young adult. It's a genre that's a wonderful vehicle for heavy themes, ideas and thoughtful storytelling, but *Seventh Child* is a dreary take on the familiar.

Fifteen-year-old secondary school student September Weekes is easy to get behind,

given she's teased over her weight and name with all the usual clichés of teen life. But they aren't presented in a way that's either humorous, engaging or fresh, coming up little better than if David Eddings had a pop at writing Tracy Beaker. September discovers a curious stone that in moonlight whisks her off to the fantasy land Gwlad, where she's soon embroiled in their defence against evil.

The names come straight from Welsh and even with the

pronunciation guide at the front of the book, you'll be struggling over them. Given his educational background, it's little wonder the prose has an academic edge, and there is some evocative, if lengthy, description but it's often qualified with asinine reactions and throwaway sentences. As for the second book, well, the best is surely yet to come.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★★★ 5

A BRAND-NEW NOVELISATION
OF A CULT TELEVISION CLASSIC

SKY

BOB BAKER

INTERVIEW - BOB BAKER

STARBURST chats to legendary scriptwriter **BOB BAKER**, whose novelisation of **SKY** has just been released, about the series, the book, and his long and distinguished career...

Bob Baker is probably best-known these days for his work on Aardman Animation's hugely successful *Wallace and Gromit* animations including the Oscar-winning *The Wrong Trousers* in 1993. To *Doctor Who* fans, he's remembered as one of "The Bristol Boys", his writing partnership with Dave Martin in the 1970s leading to a string of memorable adventures including the tenth anniversary serial *The Three Doctors* as well as 1971's colourful and imaginative *Claws of Axos* and 1977's *Invisible Enemy*, which introduced the indomitable robot dog K-9 into the series. But during the 1970s, Bob and Dave also worked for HTV in the West of England where they created a number of iconic children's fantasy serials including 1975's *Sky*, the story of a glowing-eyed super-powerful alien teenager stranded in modern-day England and battling the forces of nature as he tries to return to his own world.

STARBURST: Had you been aware before writing your novelisation that *Sky* was a show for which people have such fond memories?

Bob Baker: Well it's actually become a kind of cult and a lot of people ask me about it when

I'm doing signings and appearances. They ask me 'Did you write *Sky*? I remember that, it was fantastic!' What really brought it home to me was when I was in Australia doing the *K-9* series and I did a radio interview in Brisbane and they were asking me more questions about *Sky*, which I couldn't believe because I didn't even know they'd seen it over there!

So how did you come to novelise the series forty years after it was screened on TV?

I was approached by Fantom, who are doing a lot of books based on some of the more obscure shows for HTV and other regions who did some pretty interesting stuff for kids back in the 1970s. They've brought out a portfolio of books including things like *Children of the Stones* and I think it's a really good thing that they're being revisited as books because all these shows were so fresh at the time. Dave and I were writing *Doctor Who* regularly at the time, and *Sky* was our attempt to create our own Time Lord!

How did you go about turning the scripts into a novel? Bearing in mind it was set in 1975, were you tempted to update it into the modern day or embellish the show's narrative?

Well it's still very much a period piece, so there are lots of lovely things such as people not being stuck to their mobile phones all the time! The only real change is that in writing the book I've been able to have 'interior thinking'; I could have just followed the script but the book would have ended up about eighty pages long, so it's nice to be able to describe things and show the way people are feeling about things and what their deepest fears are. It was fun to write in that respect because I got into the characters ten times more than we could in the scripts.

How did the series originally come about?

We'd been a bit of a hit at HTV because we'd helped out with a few problem shows and they just said to us, 'Right, give us a serial – seven parts – for kids.' They didn't say what they wanted; they just wanted an outline, and when they saw it they said, 'Fine, do it.' We got several shows like that – series like *King of the Castle* and *Follow Me* – and eventually we went off into doing one-off thrillers where again they just said to us, 'Write us a thriller.'

It's hard to imagine the whole commissioning process being so easy in an era where shows are 'focus-grouped' to within an inch of their lives before a page of the script is written...

Even towards the end of our time at HTV – and I think I was there for about seven years – there were people starting to get involved and taking over whole areas of the process, saying, 'You've got to do this, you've got to do that' and nowadays you've got these awful obstacles in trying to get anything on at the BBC. You can't just send it to the Script Department and get an answer; you've got to get over the barbed-wire and through the mud first!

Did you have any notes or input from HTV as *Sky* was progressing?

We were just left to it. Nobody changed a word of it. Obviously, we went through it with the producer Patrick Dromgoole and the director and we'd change things here and there but we'd do it together in an evening session and then the next day we'd have a new draft to do which might take us two or three days but we all felt it was good, it was *right*.

In many ways, *Sky* was ahead of its time with some of its ecological themes and the concept of the Earth as a living being defending itself from outside attack. Were these issues which particularly interested you then?

I think a lot of it came from reading and absorbing books and papers at the time. For instance, there was this whole 'Was God an astronaut?' belief popularised by Erich Von Däniken, which was a sort of kicker to get it going. It began to expand from there, and we thought that ultimately he wasn't a 'God' character, he was a stranger in the wrong place at the wrong time which gave it a kind of twist. We were also able to comment on the hippy movement without fear because *Sky* was an alien commenting on it; he saw through the hippy characters and thought that their waiting around for some sort of God was just a bit stupid. We fed into all sorts of other things such as this personification of the Animus and the idea of the whole world reacting against this alien presence and using plants and nature to get rid of it.

Considering it was made in 1975, the Chroma Key visual effects still look effective, especially the eerie sequences with the starscape overlaid onto *Sky*'s eyes. I thought the 'eye' scenes were fantastic, the idea of looking into his eyes and seeing the Universe. That's actually one of the things people seem to remember. We went to the shoot every day, and it was a pig setting up

those shots, but once it was done it was terrific. Everyone at HTV tried their best; there was a real camaraderie about the place and everyone did their absolute best to get it right. We were delighted because HTV hadn't done a lot of Chroma Key [green screen] and special effects things and it was all pretty new to them, but I think it came off very well.

Were you pleased with the casting, especially the very striking Marc Harrison as *Sky* himself and Robert Eddison as Goodchild?

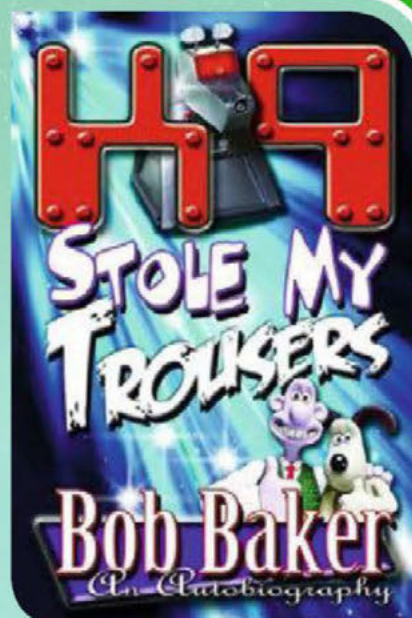
I thought the acting was generally excellent. Marc was a brilliant actor, but he didn't do much after *Sky*, just a couple of soaps and one other lead role. When I knew we had Robert Eddison as Goodchild, I thought, 'Wow!' because I really couldn't have asked for better. It was absolutely our intention to create a character in the mould of *Doctor Who*'s Master, who we'd written for previously.

Was there ever any discussion about a second series of *Sky*?

No, it was always just a one-off. I mean, we'd have been happy to have taken the final episode and develop some stuff there but it wasn't to be. We had so much to do at that time anyway. I'd be interested in doing a sequel as a novel, but I'm already commissioned to do *King of the Castle*.

Beyond *Sky*, of course, one of your great legacies is *Doctor Who*'s K-9. Are you surprised by his/its enduring popularity?

I am surprised and delighted even though we changed him and regenerated him in the Australian series we did a few years back. I wasn't entirely happy with the series; it worked in that we had K-9 with a sense of humour and flying around which made it so much better because he could get to places where you need him to get and could believe he could get. I noticed when he reappeared in *Doctor Who* in 'School Reunion' it looked so awkward when he trundled off at the end with Sarah Jane and that kind of



awkwardness just looks very old-fashioned now. A robot rolling around on the ground and tripping over things doesn't really cut it anymore. I'm actually just working on another K-9 idea which we're trying to get together with a Canadian company and an Australian company, but it's still early days. It'll be much the same as the version we did in Australia which finally ended up as we wanted it in the last episodes when we finally got our way and I wrote one and we got a bloody good director!

What do you think of the current version of *Doctor Who*?

I like Peter Capaldi, I think he's very good. Some of the scripts haven't been what I'd call up to standard. Some of the early ones with Capaldi were superb, but I saw one recently with lots of kids running around, and I thought, 'This just isn't working.' There just seems to be a lot of shouting and running about. I offered my services when the show first came back, but they didn't want to know; I heard in a roundabout way that they didn't want to use any people from the old series at all. Fair enough, I suppose, but if you come up with a good idea for a script I don't see what's wrong with that. Age shouldn't matter.

Wallace and Gromit has been your 'big one' over the last few years. Any more Aardman adventures in the pipeline?

I keep asking Nick [Park, director] but I haven't had any positive answer! Obviously I'd love to do another, as I think a fifth one would really tie it off nicely. But it's up to them, I can't push it, I'm just the hired help! I think *The Wrong Trousers* has probably been my career highpoint, and when I found out it had won the Oscar, I just couldn't believe it.

WORDS: PAUL MOUNT

BOB BAKER's novelisation of *SKY* and his autobiography, *K-9 STOLE MY TROUSERS* are available now from Fantom Films Books.



VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

JOEL HARLEY PULLS MONITOR DUTY TO BRING YOU THE LATEST FROM THE WORLD OF COMIC BOOKS



a crossover between the folks of *Riverdale* and the one-time nemesis of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Batman. That's an oddly specific fan-base you're appealing to there, but, again, this is a thing that *definitely* exists, out to buy now, from Dark Horse Comics and writer Alex de Campi (*My Little Pony*). Still not an April Fools' joke, honest.

One bit of comic news many will be hoping was a cruel April Fools' joke is a controversial book cover by DC Comics for *Batgirl* #41. In the special edition cover, heroine Barbara Gordon is depicted in the hands of old foe Joker, holding her (rather limply, it must be said) with a gun as he draws a crooked smile on her face with what is assumed to be blood. In said cover, Barbara appears petrified, a tear rolling down her cheek, as Joker (bedecked in full *Killing Joke* gear) grins on in standard Joker manner. Needless to say, such a potentially (trigger warning: Internet lingo) 'triggering' image belched up quite the social media storm. Understandably so; *Batgirl* has gained quite the following recently, namely for its fun tone and likeable heroine. To use that all-ages comic as a springboard for this – tonally opposite – image is thoughtless and distasteful at best. To be clear, I do think there's a time and place for this sort of (very well done) artwork – *Killing Joke* being an important part of Barbara and the Joker's history – but this certainly isn't it. At the request of artist Rafael Albuquerque, the image has been pulled by DC. This has caused further furore by those crying words like 'censorship' and 'feminazi', threatening to start a veritable #Comicsgate, fighting for Joker's right to harass and further traumatise poor Barbara on the cover of her own (wholly unrelated) book, no less.

It continues a trend in which the Clown Prince of Crime becomes a less and less 'fun' antagonist for the Bat-family. Granted, he's always been a monstrous fellow (the death of Robin, murder of Sarah Essen, crippling of Barbara), but there's a temptation by writers to make him into an unstoppable slasher villain and forget about the part of his personality where he's just as happy committing goofy boner-based crimes or simply robbing a bank. Murderous and evil is all fine and well, but it does make me crave Cesar Romero and his silly moustache – or even Jack Nicholson and his Prince soundtrack – just that little bit more. Why so serious, modern Joker? #NotAllJokers.

Ah, April. That special time of year when the process of my research leaves me wading through 'hilarious' fake news stories and made-up pieces, all claiming that Daryl Dixon is joining the *Walking Dead* comics (see last year), Daryl Dixon is being killed off on the *Walking Dead* TV show and (insert pretend *Walking Dead* news story here, probably involving Daryl Dixon and a certain Negan's casting of some variety). Rest assured, there'll be none of that

nonsense here (not least because April 1st will have been and gone for weeks by the time you read this), mostly because all good comics news is plenty silly enough to begin with.

We live, after all, in a world where *Archie vs. Predator* is a thing you can literally buy in shops, and not just from a strange man on a street corner, having scrawled the strip on the back pages of a jotter pad, sold to make enough money from comics fans desperate for



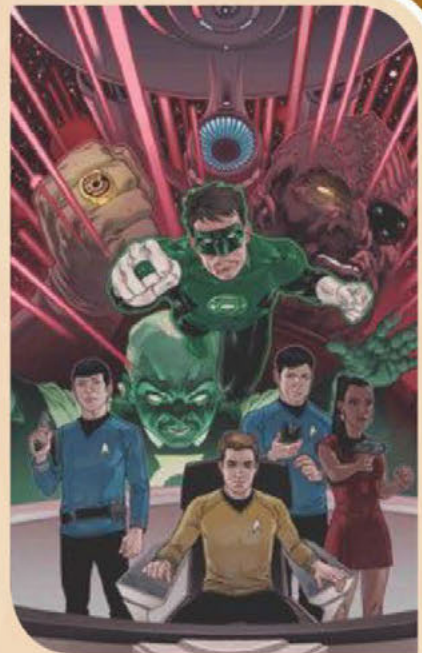
Thankfully, more progressive than that, is Marvel's unveiling of their new Avengers line-up. While we eagerly await *Age of Ultron* and its line-up of white guys named Chris, *All-New, All-Different Avengers* gets us a roster of Avengers more representative of the publishers' diverse range of characters and personalities. Unsurprisingly, Spidey du jour Miles Morales leads the way, backed up by Thor (in her current female incarnation), Falcon (as Captain America), Captain Marvel, Vision and a number of others, new and old. As the MCU actors' contracts run out, and new characters are introduced, it'll be interesting to see how (or if) the movies follow suit. It can only be a matter of time.

Never ones to be behind on the curve, the fine droids of *2000 AD* are keeping it topical with a new antagonist for grumpy



future lawman Judge Dredd – politician Bilius Barrage. Closely resembling a certain candidate in modern British politics, Barrage is to take centre stage in *Judge Dredd: People Like Us*, using the events of *Day of Chaos* to stir racial tensions between native Big Meg citizens and alien immigrants. The exact story remains to be seen, but it's bound not to end well for Barrage – there's only room for one fascist in Mega-City One, and at least Dredd is a bastard across the board, as opposed to picking on certain elements of society. Maybe there's something to be said for doing away with that pesky democracy lark after all.

From one slimy monster to another; the movie franchise that feels practically made for comics is getting its own four-issue miniseries. *Pacific Rim: Tales from the Drift* will debut in November, based

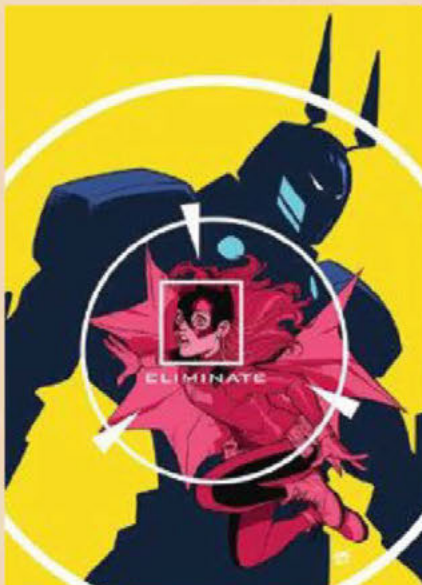


on a story by movie screenwriter Travis Beacham. This acts as a follow-up to the previously published *Pacific Rim* comics prequel and will tide us over (no pun intended) until the inevitable movie sequel turns up.

It's become a tradition to end on a note such as the above, finishing in the smaller presses for our last titbit of news. This month, however, we head back to DC for a potentially fantastic bit of news that, again, isn't made-up or a joke. DC Comics are teaming up with IDW for a crossover that you didn't know you ever wanted to see until now. This summer, you'll be able to pick up *Star Trek/Green Lantern: The Spectrum War* – a story in which Green Lantern Hal Jordan crosses paths with Captain Kirk and the Starship Enterprise. I would have preferred Guy Gardner and the Captain Picard crew (because who wouldn't want to see a showdown between Worf and Gardner) but Hal and the original crew are perhaps the most sensible pick. The official synopsis reads as such: "The balance of the universe will be tested when the Green Lantern Corps' Power Rings come into possession of certain Star Trek characters while a dark and powerful evil looms around every corner." *Star Trek/Green Lantern #1* will emerge from blackest night this July. As long as stupid Cumber-Khan isn't in it, I'm more than game. And it will, of course, be infinitely better than *Star Trek/X-Men* (totally a thing).

And on that note, we wind down another month's instalment of *View from the Watchtower*, having taken in everything from the mundane to the cosmic. All that without a Daryl Dixon in sight, real or fake. In the meantime, feel free to hit me up on Twitter or e-mail with any comics-related chatter you might have.

Joel Harley can be contacted at:
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 and tweeted @joelharley



Batgirl #41 and the controversial, withdrawn variant - 'feminazi' censorship or good judgement?
 Have your say and write to us at letters@starburstmagazine.com

REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC
BOOK RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES / GHOSTBUSTERS

WRITER: ERIK BURNHAM, TOM WALTZ / ARTIST: DAN SCHOENING /
PUBLISHER: IDW / RELEASE DATE: APRIL 21ST

IDW have done sterling work so far in taking popular pop culture franchises and making them look shiny and new. So far, both the Ghostbusters and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles comic books have been cleverly written and delightfully drawn; each drawing upon the history of their franchises to deliver something that will appeal to large numbers of fans. Forming a crossover between the two books seems both obvious and a bit unusual. Luckily, the result has been far greater than simply a straightforward promotional stunt.

The plot is quite amusing; Donatello's experiments with a teleportation machine go awry, sending the Ninja Turtles to another dimension and unwittingly releasing an exiled god called Chi-You into the same world. Chi-You proceeds to



wreak havoc, capturing Casey Jones and generally being a malevolent spirit. Fortunately, this is a reality in which the Ghostbusters exist. The two sets of heroes quickly exchange notes, and the Turtles discover that they have very little time to rescue their friend, defeat a god, and return to their own reality.

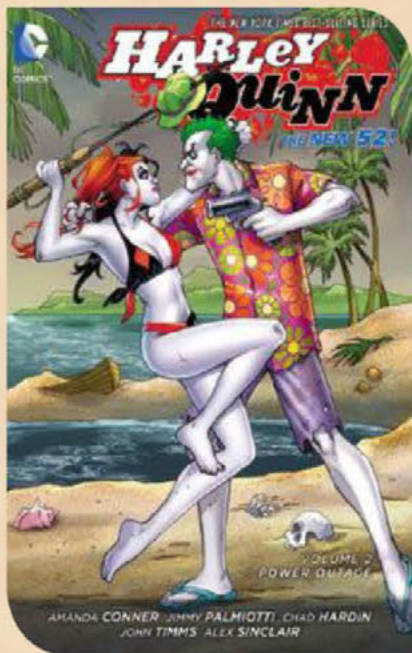
Broadly, this is a fun little romp. The Ghostbusters and Turtles have very similar team dynamics, and Burnham has a firm understanding of what makes both teams tick. Michelangelo and Venkman get the lion's share of the funniest lines, Donatello and Egon are great together, and Leonardo and Winston also have a distinct moment. There's also a nice examination of the thematic and metaphysical differences between the two settings, which sets up some of the humour and drama between the characters.

Schoening's art is as beautiful as always. His distinct and definitive approach to the Ghostbusters also works quite well with the Turtles, though it's clear that he's more comfortable drawing humans and monsters than he is with mutants. The narrative and visual differences between the two New Yorks is also well handled, and the ghosts are particularly dramatic and notable.

The crossover works so well that you do wonder why they've never tried this before, and we do hope that they'll do it again.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★ 7



HARLEY QUINN VOL 2: POWER OUTAGE

WRITER: JIMMY PALMIOTTI, AMANDA CONNER /
ARTIST: CHAD HARDIN / PUBLISHER: DC /
RELEASE DATE: APRIL 21ST

The previous volume of DC's Harley Quinn suffered from trying too hard. DC clearly

understood that they had an entertaining and wacky villain in Harley Quinn and made it resemble Marvel's Deadpool a little too much. Luckily, by Volume 2, they've scaled back a lot of the wacky violence and the result is a funny, quirky and clever book that actually works.

The plot is broadly irrelevant; we have elderly cyborgs, roller derby girl shenanigans, utterly doomed burlesque, and one of the most unlikely superhuman team-ups that you'll see in comic books - Harley Quinn and Power Girl. The book has learned how to ram its tongue straight into its cheek and sends up DC's rather rotten history with female heroes. The result is laugh-out-loud funny and at times the arc plot even looks like it's going somewhere.

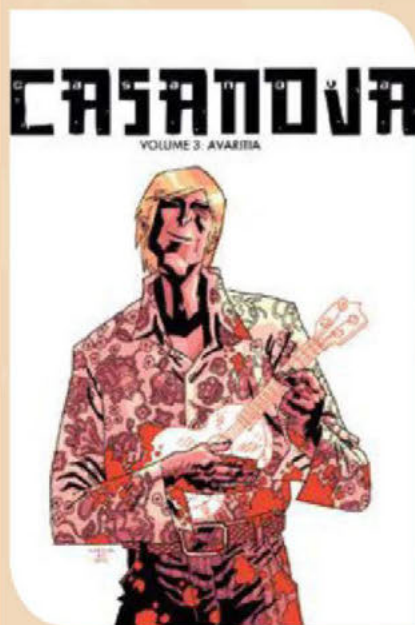
In addition to an actual storyline, we also get three fun standalone stories. First we get a Future's End tale, basically a story about Harley's final days. It's a deliberately cliché-packed desert island-style romantic comedy though, of course, this is Harley so it doesn't end at all well. Next up is a pastiche of San Diego Comic Con, and takes a gently mocking look at the biggest geek event in the world. Harley has to deal with hordes of fanboys, cosplayers and the tedium of running a stall, all whilst trying to get her portfolio seen by someone at DC Comics. Fourth wall smashing it may be, but it's also quite funny. The last solo story is a reasonable shot at telling Quinn's origin story without being too mawkish or dark.

It works reasonably well, but it's hardly a 'secret' origin, more just a reminder as to who character is (and in case you've forgotten, Harley Quinn is a murderer).

The artwork is consistent and lovingly done, breaking the standard DC Comics mould, and the book really benefits from this. Okay, so it's filled with hyper-cute cartoonish characters and there are a lot of drawings of pretty women throughout the book, but in the context of a very silly comic strip, this works. Harley Quinn Vol. 2: Power Outage is a huge improvement on the last book. Let's hope they keep it up.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★ 7



CASANOVA THE COMPLETE EDITION VOL 3: AVARITIA

WRITER: MATT FRACTION / ARTIST: GABRIEL
BÁ / PUBLISHER: IMAGE COMICS / RELEASE
DATE: OUT NOW

Avaritia, Vol 3 of Casanova, gathers up the full uncensored story arc for the first time in this complete edition of the sprawling ballsy sci-fi series. The issues are

unusually short at only 16 pages a piece, and the volume is made up of 12 issues in all. It's a heady and idiosyncratic story from the demented mind of Matt Fraction, with all his deadly wit and nihilistic humour.

Astronaut Casanova Quinn is the greatest killer humankind has ever produced, and volume 3 sees him chronically ill and at odds with his father. E.M.P.I.R.E. have a new mission on their agenda, to destroy Newman Xeno, by killing every alternative timeline they can find in the past in a transdimensional crusade. But in one of those timelines, Cass discovers Xeno's real name and, having killed multiple versions of him, soon develops a warped affection and decides to spare one of the versions. The rest? Well, that'd be telling.

There are infinite variations of the world, and we only ever glimpse a few, whether it's steampunk, blaxploitation or the Wild West. Within this shifting multiverse, there are pages that are often hard to swallow, especially the shooting at the comic convention, mirroring an all too familiar gun culture. The bombastic spacey saga is pootled along with moments of genuine genius. Issue 6 is especially inventive, winding up the great swathe of action movies, using the formulaic dialogue to rib-tickling effect.

Of course, the story itself is nothing without Gabriel Bá's art, in all its strange shapes and proportions. It's transcendental and super psychedelic, especially the final issue which is like a

kaleidoscopic trip through art as we know it. It leaps off the page with bold colours from Cris Peter. There's even one panel in 3D, so if you have your specs spare, you'll be laughing.

It's bursting with back matter, almost fifty pages worth, with process art, covers and a ramble from Fraction which charts the difficult journey of the third volume, complete with letters pages. Strikingly inventive, daubed with eroticism and crammed up the wazoo with subversion, Casanova is a meta treat.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★ 9





SALTIRE: ANNIHILATION (PART 2)

**WRITER: JOHN FERGUSON / ARTIST: CLAIRE ROE,
LAUREN KNIGHT / PUBLISHER: DIAMONDSTEEL
COMICS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW**

The rampage of the Ban Sith and the vampiric plague she unleashed upon Scotland was only the first wave of the Mercyan's campaign of destruction. Now the forces of the Saxon warlord stand at the foothills of the Borders, ready to march across the land and lay waste to all that lies before them.

Superheroes need to be super; that's obvious. But they also need to be fallible. If they're just some invincible set of powers then any threat can be defeated with little effort, which runs the risk of them becoming boring as any tension is removed from their

exploits. Up until now, Saltire has seemed to be a quite literal force of nature, his swords cutting an unrelenting swathe through his enemies with little resistance. However, at the end of part one of Annihilation we were introduced to his kryptonite: alcohol, and that this should be the defined weakness of a Scottish hero could spark quite a debate. Although, now this weakness has been identified it would seem to have a simple solution of keepin' 'im aff the bevvie, so it'll be intriguing to see precisely how it can be used against him in future.

As the Saxon army advances from the south, the big blue ginger one has been left in a drunken coma, leaving the Guardians to face the army without the nation's immortal protector. While infused with the power of ancient magic, most of the Guardians are still human, and when facing an entire army single-mindedly geared towards utter ruination the odds seem to be stacked too highly against them. As one by one they begin to fall under the crushing tide of the relentless onslaught and the survivors are driven further and further north, despair begins to set in, not only for precisely how victory over the oppressors will be attained, but also if it even can be.

Even after Saltire is awoken from his stupor, the tide isn't necessarily turned, as the Mercyan's dark witch minion Ester summons Tuisto, the deific Germanic allfather, and what follows is far from a simple retread of Saltire's duel with Mars Ultor that climaxed the battle of Invasion. Even the greatest fighters in the world inevitably have their skills blunted by the effects of booze, and with Saltire hungover and lethargic, and Tuisto born of the earth and manifesting as a 200-foot stone colossus, it takes more than just physical might to put down the enemy once and for all.

From their inception, the Saltire comics were intended to utilise Scotland's extensive mythological history that exists largely untapped in fiction. In keeping with this, the fantastical nature of the dialogue maintains

the feeling that the comic series could be a retelling of an ancient saga, a Scottish equivalent of epic poems such as The Nibelungenlied, Beowulf or The Odyssey. The story itself is pretty straightforward, but the depth of its themes raises it above a simple action comic, incorporating notions of honour, self-sacrifice, standing for ideals greater than yourself, and the nobility in laying down your life in the defence of others. While no less grim and shadowed, the artwork doesn't have quite as much gleeful bloodlust as part one, and although there isn't the same level of wanton carnage propelling the story, the action is augmented with a satisfying volume of fire and explosions that create wonderfully dramatic backdrops for striking menacing and heroic poses against.

The story ends on a two-panel stinger that acts as a set up for the next book and an antagonist's possible return, the location of which also gives a big clue as to the next foe that Saltire and the Guardians will face.

ANDREW MARSHALL



MOBILIA (APP)

**WRITER: SAM GARDNER / ARTWORK: LEE
O'CONNOR, JAKE ROWLINSON / RELEASE
DATE: OUT NOW (FOR IPAD)**

After drawing a blank trying to find a digital avenue for his own comics, Sam Gardner made his own app instead. Mobilia took three years to develop and debuted to overwhelming success at last month's London Super Comic Con. It may have a primitive design, but there's oodles of potential. Included is the first issue of Sioux Warrior, penned by Gardner, and within a few pages you realise he's fulfilled his mission of pushing the boundaries of what comics can be.

Issue one is the first of its kind, uniquely blending optical illusions, traditional storytelling and all the spectacle of rock opera. The music itself sounds like a blend between Andrew Lloyd Webber and Manowar with some softer country twangs thrown into the mix. As it leads you through the narrative, with sections of the page lighting up in colour with the progression of the musical narration, it feels like a new take on karaoke; comicoke, if you will.

It pokes fun at the idea of superheroes throughout, but it's also as life-affirming and inspiring as any of the rest of them.

But more than the earnest story is its inventiveness. The last third is like watching a pantomime play out on the label of a spinning vinyl; the way the images change with the story is quite mesmerising. For those of you that are fortunate enough to possess a 3D printer, there's even a free code included to print out the bust of the main protagonist.

It's not without a few hiccups, the most noticeable being the milliseconds between page turns which can disrupt the flow enough to break immersion. But Gardner's cracked interactive comics with a flair and honesty that the likes of Marvel and DC just haven't figured out. You can download the soundtrack from iTunes too, and we'd highly recommend it to anyone who liked Repo: The Genetic Opera or The Rocky Horror Picture Show. With results this good, Mobilia is only going to grow. Roll on the next issue.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT





**LOW VOLUME 1:
THE DELIRIUM OF HOPE**

WRITER: RICK REMENDER / ARTIST: GREG TOCCHINI / PUBLISHER: IMAGE COMICS /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Tens of thousands of years in the future, faced with the threat of an exploding sun, humanity has retreated to the bottom of the ocean, waiting in hope for the return of

probes sent to find habitable worlds. With air running out, society has generated two excesses that would make Caligula blush; drug-fuelled orgies are the order of the day within the higher echelons of government, while the lower classes prowls the streets in search of sex and drugs or both. It's a grim world, but Low's central character Stel Caine offers hope. She's the eternal optimist, someone willing to fight for what she believes in, despite the odds that are heavily stacked against her and her family.

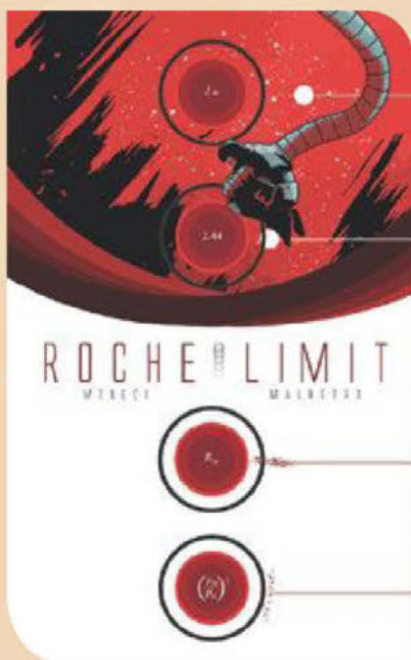
Low gets off to a slightly shaky start, with Rick Remender's writing feeling clunky; the initial exchange between Stel and her husband feels too much like exposition. Yet these first few pages serve their purpose to establish situation and relationships surprisingly well, easing the reader into the world before getting the story going with a bang. As it continues, Low grows to feel like an epic worthy of Homer; a mythic journey even though it's set far into the future, a stunning combination of philosophy and rollicking adventure.

Greg Tocchini provides artwork that complements the story, painting a surreal and often dreamlike future. It can feel too sketchy at times, and on occasion there's so much going on it's hard to tell who's who, but the overall design is phenomenal, with the use of colours and shadows adding further mystery to the panels. Even a blank, black page is used well.

Be warned, though: Low isn't for the faint of heart. There's a lot of sex, swearing and violence that may turn some readers away. Any who are willing to continue will continue until the final page and find themselves rewarded by a story that is much more than it first appears to be; a moral tale of how hope can prevail through even the darkest of times.

ALISTER DAVISON

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



**ROCHE LIMIT VOL 1:
ANOMALOUS**

WRITER: MICHAEL MORECI / ARTIST: VIC MALHOTRA / PUBLISHER: IMAGE COMICS /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

There are some artist/writer combinations in comic books that seemed to have been written in the stars themselves, be it

Jack Kirby and Stan Lee or Matt Fraction and Chip Zdarsky. Roche Limit sees the perfect pairing of writer Michael Moreci and artist Vic Malhotra, and Volume 1: Anomalous marks the first in their masterful sci-fi noir series.

The narration is devastating, as it charts the last recordings of Langford Skaargard, self-styled adventurer, eccentric and billionaire. After delivering on his promise to take humankind to the stars, his dream becomes a cruel reality. Roche Limit, a grubby colony floating on the edge of an enigmatic anomaly, is a cyberpunk microcosm of organised crime, drug trade and terrible secrets. Alex Ford, chemist-cum-drugs manufacturer, is the only one who knows how to produce the existential high-inducing recall, which enables users to relive moments in their life of pure joy and happiness. After Bekkah Hudson goes missing, Alex, her boyfriend, and sister Sonya go up against troubled figures of the colony's deepest underground and onto a discovery of what our future's worth.

Moreci's writing reads like Douglas Adams and Ray Bradbury with all the self-assured intellect of Isaac Asimov and Phillip K. Dick and with the sharp dialogue recalling pulpy noir exchanges while avoiding genre pitfalls altogether. He carefully balances plots, beautifully woven together for a satisfying and resonating conclusion. Philosophical, theological and full of barbed diatribes and biting social commentary, Moreci's writing has the perfect accompaniment in

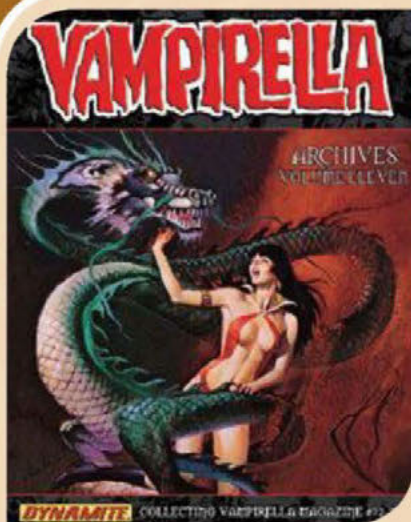
Malhotra's art; sketchy, dark, foreboding and with a Frank Miller edge. There are some truly outstanding panels, where he demonstrates his space-scapes are second to none. Together they've created a fully realised world that is at once familiar and esoteric. At the end of each issue is supplementary material which ties directly into the narrative; be it a newspaper article or a magazine piece, each add a sense of effective realism.

Despite its grim look at the future, Roche Limit is no less beautiful, no less full of wonder and marvel. It's a powerful metaphor for drug abuse, for sin and redemption and, of course, god. For a fix of cerebral, introspective sci-fi, it's not cinema that'll nourish you, it's Moreci and Malhotra.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★★★★★★ 10





VAMPIRELLA ARCHIVES VOLUME 11

WRITER & ARTIST: VARIOUS / PUBLISHER:
DYNAMITE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

In the ongoing collection preserving Vampi's good name and early exploits, Dynamite have gathered up Vampirella Magazine #72-79 for Volume 11. The magazine continues her ongoing story in amongst pulpy sci-fi and wonderfully weird horror tales. Given that most of the strips are in black and white, the whole collection is steeped in Gothic scuzz; even

the brighter sci-fi stories have a grubby newsprint quality to them which only makes them more endearing.

There are plenty of stories not worth reading let alone remembering, and this isn't a collection you'll want to read cover to cover, instead it's one to cherry pick the best. It's those involving Vampi herself which are sure to hold fans' attention, old and new. Bill DuBay, several time editor and writer for Warren Publishing, lent some of his best work to Vampirella Magazine. Decades later, his stories still prove to be among the best the character has been given. One highlight is the book-length story Gathering of Demons in issue 73. With art from Gonzalo Mayo, it brings all the familiar components of Vampi comics together: the vampire hunters Adam and Conrad Van Helsing, the bumbling Pendragon, and the gal herself in full detective, take-no-shit mode years before Angel and the notion of vampire do-gooders hit our screens.

Another superb story from DuBay and Mayo is the fabulous Kiss of the Dragon Queen from issue 78. You quickly get a sense of his importance in the development of the character and the rich exploration of his storytelling, reverberating even in Nancy A. Collins' run today. Another DuBay highlight is The Beauty and The Behemoth; it's great fun and features Vampi's quirky buddy Pantha, with archetypal art from Jose Gonzalez.

Many of the stories are surprisingly

progressive, though plenty others aren't, as it seems a prerequisite to have bare breasts in every strip. The occasional racial stereotype will probably make you cringe, but it was the '70s after all and we'd like to think things have gotten a bit better.

Each issue is presented as they were published, with the wonderful vintage ads, Scarlet Letters column, and Vampi's Vault included. It's a great annual chronicling a time when comic readers wanted something harder and darker for their buck. Some of the stories were perhaps better left unread, but it's worth the cover price for the DuBay stories alone.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★★★★ 8



GODZILLA CATAclysm

WRITER: CULLEN BUNN / ARTIST: DAVE WACHTER
/ PUBLISHER: IDW / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

A post-apocalyptic tale featuring the mighty Godzilla is such an obvious premise it's a bit of a surprise that they haven't based a movie on it. Godzilla Cataclysm

is a comic-strip tale set in a world where the age of man has been stomped into the ground by the giant scaly foot of Godzilla during an epic battle involving all the Kaiju.

The few tribes of mankind that remain scrape by in the ruins of ancient cities. The monsters have left, leaving the survivors with little but rags and sorrow. Humanity has taken to mythologizing the events, some worshipping the Kaijū as if they were gods. A scavenging team encounters unusual plant growth during a trip to what remains of Tokyo, and mayhem ensues as the group not only discover something that may redeem the human race, but also find out first hand that the Kaiju have returned.

Writer Cullen Bunn creates a whole world using very little; the tragedy of the main characters, their hubris, and the horror of the world made by man and monster is all laid bare with some very simple storytelling strokes. The human element exists to frame the epic monster-on-monster action, just like all good Godzilla stories do. Dave Wachter's artwork is nothing short of beautiful here; a careful blend of art styles pays homage to all things Godzilla and he draws radiation-spewing terrors rather well.

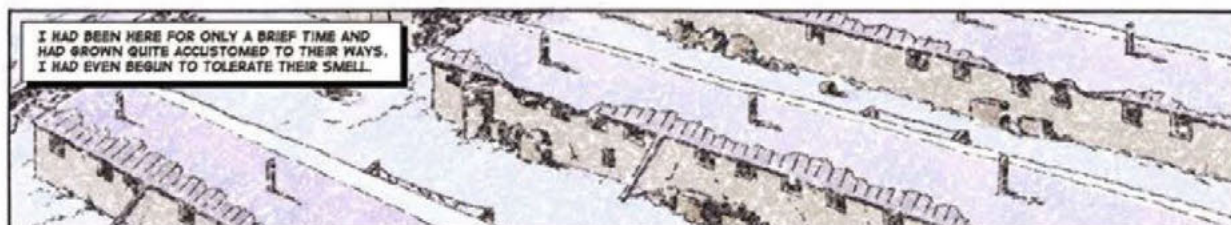
Its main problem, like most visual treats, is that it's rather short. Once we get into the meat of the action, things go very quickly and all too soon it's over. It's a complete story in and of itself, but we'd love to see what happens next to the survivors of the Cataclysm.

The book does go completely nuts with the Kaijū; expect to see almost all of your favourites, even the likes of Biollante and Destoroyah get to show up and do their thing, and Wachter draws each of these creatures in loving detail. If the idea of a world in which huge monsters use the remains of modern civilisation as their sandpit makes you grin, then you'll definitely get a kick out of Godzilla Cataclysm.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★ 8





I HAD BEEN HERE FOR ONLY A BRIEF TIME AND HAD GROWN QUITE ACCUSTOMED TO THEIR WAYS. I HAD EVEN BEGUN TO TOLERATE THEIR SMELL.



OUR MOON ORBITS WHAT YOU CALL A GAS GIANT. IT'S SO BIG THAT THE GRAVITY COMPRESSES THE GASSES IN TO A SOLID.

WE ORBIT A BINARY SYSTEM AND AT TIMES THE PROXIMITY OF THE PLANET CAUSES THE SURFACE ITSELF TO BURN!

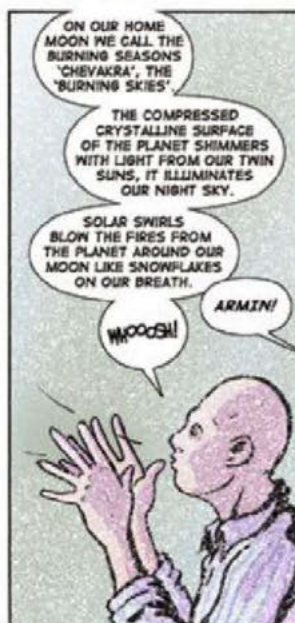
WOW!



SO YOUR PLANET IS ON FIRE?

NO CHILD. WE LIVE ON A MOON OF THE PLANET, AND IT ONLY BURNS SOME OF THE TIME.

WHAT'S IT LIKE? ON YOUR MOON I MEAN, WHEN IT BURNS?



ON OUR HOME MOON WE CALL THE BURNING SEASONS 'CHEVAKRA', THE 'BURNING SKIES'.

THE COMPRESSED CRYSTALLINE SURFACE OF THE PLANET SHIMMERS WITH LIGHT FROM OUR TWIN SUNS, IT ILLUMINATES OUR NIGHT SKY.

SOLAR SWIRLS BLOW THE FIRES FROM THE PLANET AROUND OUR MOON LIKE SNOWFLAKES ON OUR BREATH.

ARMIN!

WOOSH!



STILL FILLING MY GRANDDAUGHTERS HEAD WITH ALL THAT NONSENSE?

TALKING OF IMPOSSIBLE WORLDS, BURNING PLANETS. REALLY?



IT'S NOT NON-SENSE GRANDPA! ARMIN KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS.

HE TALKS OF STARS WHICH ARE NOT EVEN THERE.

I'VE STUDIED THE SKY ALL MY LIFE CHILD, I KNOW THE CONSTELLATIONS.



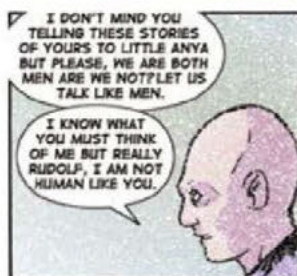
IT'S YOUR EYES, RUDOLF. THEY JUST CAN'T SEE THE FREQUENCIES THAT MINE DO.

WHEN YOUR KIND BREACHES THE ATMOSPHERE YOU WILL FIND THESE THINGS



TSCHH, MY KIND. I FORGET, YOU ARE SOME KIND OF SPACE MAN, NOT

I AM, RUDOLF.



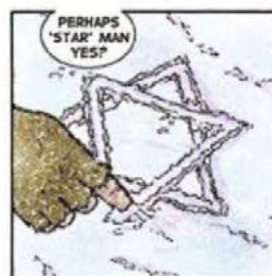
I DON'T MIND YOU TELLING THESE STORIES OF YOURS TO LITTLE ANYA BUT PLEASE, WE ARE BOTH MEN ARE WE NOT? LET US TALK LIKE MEN.

I KNOW WHAT YOU MUST THINK OF ME BUT REALLY RUDOLF, I AM NOT HUMAN LIKE YOU.



YOU KNOW ARMIN, IN THIS PLACE, IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO BE HUMAN, THEN THAT'S FINE. YOU CAN BE SPACE MAN.

ALTHOUGH PERHAPS ARMIN, YOU MIGHT TRY FINDING ESCAPE SOMEPLACE ELSE. SPACEMAN?



PERHAPS 'STAR' MAN YES?

SOME KIND OF SPACEMAN

by Daniel Bell



HAVE A PLEASANT EVENING WITH YOUR STARS ARMIN.

AT THE TIME I DID NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THIS WAS NOT THE USUAL BEHAVIOR OF THIS SPECIES. I HAD SEEN SCHOOLS AND PLACES OF WORK AND ASSUMED THIS PLACE WAS SOMETHING SIMILAR...

THE REALITY OF THIS PLACE WAS SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT.

ANIME-NATION

A MONTHLY ROUND
UP FROM THE
WORLD OF ANIME
AND MANGA WITH
DOMINIC CUTHBERT



MOYASHIMON Creator Starting New Manga Series

Masayuki Ishikawa, the mastermind behind **Maria the Virgin Witch** and **Moyashimon**, has announced he will launch a new manga series in the July issue of Kodansha's **Morning Two** magazine. Given his track record, the series is surely set to be something special.

New Animes Slated

There's a whole host of upcoming animes, including an adaptation of the latest in Kazuma Kamachi's **Heavy Object** light novel series, concerned with huge powerful weapons called Objects and Elite Object pilots. It's set to premiere this autumn. Another is Chie Shinkyu's charming **Wakako-zake**, a four-volume ongoing series first released in 2013, which follows a 26-year-old woman relieving the stress of work, by spending her nights eating and drinking alone; Minoru Yamaoka (**Terror in Resonance** episode director) is helping a July production. And with multiple adaptations based on occult horror web novel **Shishou Series**, there's plenty to get excited about.

Original DIGIMON Cast Returning for 15th Anniversary

To coincide with the anime's 15-year milestone, **Digimon Adventure Tri** reunites the original characters and voice cast. The series picks up from where **Digimon Adventure** left off in 2000. It'll star original protagonist Tai, now a 17-year-old high school student. The series is slated for a spring release, but the swanky posters might just curb your nostalgia until then.



First Glimpse of ASTRO BOY Reboot

It's safe to say that **Astro Boy** is to Japan what Mickey Mouse is to America. Originally announced last year, the recent teaser trailer finally gives fans their first glimpse at the direction and style of the upcoming reboot. Blending traditional and CG animation, it sports a slick, ultra-modern look. The series is set for a 26-episode run, and is aimed at the 8-12 age bracket. The franchise was last adapted for the big screen in 2009. As of going to print, no US/UK distributor or network has been announced.

Studio Ghibli's Youngest Director Quits

After pondering what Studio Ghibli would do next, director Hiromasa Yonebayashi has admitted he's already left the studio. Having directed **Arrietty** in 2010, he was the youngest ever to helm a theatrical release for the studio. Now at 41, Yonebayashi has most recently directed **When Marnie Was There**. He has recently stated 'I'm not at Ghibli. I quit the studio last year, and I'm no longer at the production company.'

VALKYRIE DRIVE Launches

Having debuted at the lucrative Anime Japan, **Valkyrie Drive** is a mixed-media game and anime project from Marvellous Inc., largely revolving around girls who make out and transform into weapons. From creator Kenichirō Takaki, who brought audiences **Senran Kagura**, a mixed-media series of stripping ninja girls, the story focusses on a virus which turns twenty-something girls into weapons, while others develop the power to wield them. The anime's tiered approach, includes a console and a mobile game.

ONE PIECE Made 'Real'

Live action anime adaptations might be lacking at best, but Fuji TV's semi-annual special **Yonimo kimyō na Monogatari (Tales of the Unusual)** might have the best compromise; a live action collaboration with **One Piece** main man Monkey D. Luffy, to coincide with the anime's 25th anniversary. Actor Hiroshi Abe stars as a hospitalised Yakuza member, who mistakenly eats the gum-gum fruit which made Luffy go all rubbery. Luffy will be CG animated and placed in the live action segment **The Gum-Gum Man**.



YO-KAI WATCH to Promote Tourism in Hawaii

Hawaii Tourism Japan has announced that it will launch a promotional campaign in cahoots with the kids' anime and game franchise **Yo-Kai Watch**, culminating in an original animated short. Having launched in March, the campaign is set to run for two years in an attempt to boost tourism of Japanese families to Hawaii. It certainly beats Thomas Cook's approach.

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



HARLOCK SPACE PIRATE: COLLECTORS' EDITION

BD + DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SHINJI ARAMAKI / SCREENPLAY: HARUTOSHI FUKUI, KIYOTO TAKEUCHI / STARRING: DAVID MATRANGA, JESSICA BOONE, ADAM GIBBS, MIKE YAGER, EMILY NEVES / RELEASE DATE: APRIL 27TH

Released in Japan in 2013, the gothic space opera Space Pirate Captain Harlock marked Toei Animation's biggest production budget to date, with \$30 million behind the film. Based on Leiji Matsumoto's manga series, which ran from 1977 - 1979, and the subsequent '78 anime, Harlock is back with a vengeance. He's the only one

who can save mankind, but the bureaucratic Gaia Corporation conspire to stop him.

The opening text and visuals give a swell of context, but with the following voiceover it does seem like information overload. Given that the creators have brought this beast back from the brink, you can understand the enthusiasm, with the 3D option

only driving the point home.

There's a very awkward English dub that seems more like a director's commentary than dialogue coming out of the characters' mouths, and several of the characters' names have also been westernised; Yama becomes Logan, Isola became Ezra, and so on.

Harlock Space Pirate is loaded with familiar stuff for fans of anime, sci-fi or both, blending a visual aesthetic of cowboys, swashbucklers and steampunk. But it's the archetypal characters that are difficult to really get behind. Miime is an intriguing elven alien bound to Harlock and his ship, the Arcadia, though tragically underused. Kei Yuki is a fun character, but does come across two-dimensional as your token spunky woman. Harlock himself is all brooding and rugged sexuality, but, like the rest of the players, he's rather dull and flat.

The animation has a meticulous attention to detail, being the result of a five-year production. The intricate settings have so

many flourishes that only repeat viewings can allow you to take them in. Little surprise then, the animation has been courting awards and accolades the world over, and it's easy to get blindsided by its beauty. Nevertheless, there is a serious shortcoming in the script department.

While much of the dialogue might have got lost in translation and forced to fit, the story isn't inherently bad, it just lacks the same wanderlust as its visuals. At almost two hours, the animation alone isn't quite enough to hold audience attention. But for anyone still sore from Star Trek Into Darkness (i.e. everyone) and those counting down the days until The Force Awakens lands, Harlock Space Pirate may be just the film to tide you over.

Extras: Collector's booklet / Bonus disc featuring the original Japanese edit

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

+++++++ 7



MICHIKO AND HATCHIN PART 2

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: VARIOUS / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: TERRI DOTY, TORU KUSANO / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Michiko and Hatchin is a Japanese anime set in a fictional Latin-American nation that seems to be a hybrid of Japan and Brazil. In the previous eleven episodes (in the earlier volume), we meet the two title characters: Michiko, a beautiful diva with a

bad temper, and Hatchin, who she kidnaps/rescues from her strict Catholic foster family.

Created by the same team behind Cowboy Bebop, it is impossible to quit the series halfway through. The two-disc DVD set includes the last eleven episodes from the escape caper

and picks up where the first DVD set left off; with Michiko still at death's door and Hatchin forced to find alternative treatment for her accomplice that won't alert the authorities.

It is not entirely clear whether Michiko and Hatchin are biologically related or not, and a big part of the appeal to keep watching is to find out whether they really are mother and daughter as implied in the first episode. This question loses its importance as the series progresses, though, and the two form an unlikely bond regardless. The relationship is often played for laughs, however, as often it is the younger Hatchin who has to take the parental role. In one episode, Hatchin is even forced to get a job to pay for Michiko's medical treatment from an alleged faith healer. The eleven-year-old Hatchin even calls Michiko "a baby" in

this episode when she refuses to get out of bed to see the religious huckster.

You can enjoy Michiko's temper tantrums and shooting sprees in both English and the original Japanese dub, which is also included. There are also new documentaries which include interviews with the cast.

RICHARD THOMAS

+++++++ 8



PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS
IN GAMING
BY LEE PRICE



Hideo Kojima to Leave Konami

According to recent reports, it appears that there has been an enormous falling out between Hideo Kojima and Konami, with some sources claiming that Kojima will be cutting all ties with the company for good following the upcoming release of **Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain**. The source also claims that the staff at Kojima Productions have had restrictions placed on their access to company email and internet at Konami.

Kojima is essentially working simply as a contractor for Konami according to the reports, with the recent removal of the Kojima Productions logo from promotional materials relating to **The Phantom Pain** also appearing to demonstrate that a rift has formed.

Konami has issued a statement trying to quell the fires a little bit, stating: "Konami Digital Entertainment, including Mr. Kojima, will continue to develop and support **Metal Gear** products. Please look forward to future announcements."

A later statement read: "As we have already announced, we are shifting our production structure to a headquarters-controlled system, in order to establish a steadfast operating base capable of responding to the rapid market changes that surround our digital entertainment business. Konami Digital Entertainment (including

COMING SOON



FABLE LEGENDS

PLATFORM: XBOX ONE, PC

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2015

Lionhead Studios' *'Free to Play' Fable game still doesn't have a fully confirmed release date, which knowing these guys means that it is likely to end up getting delayed until later in the year. For now though, it is anticipated for a release at some point during the summer and is sure to cause a stir with fans of the series. The co-op heavy gameplay is a new avenue for the series, and it will be very interesting to see if it actually gets pulled off or if the game ends up promising more than it can actually deliver. Again.*

Mr. Kojima), will continue to develop and support Metal Gear products. Please look forward to future announcements."

That's a whole lot of business speak though it is notable for the statement that Kojima will continue to support the **Metal Gear** franchise. How much truth there is in that statement is currently up for debate, especially in the wake of an additional statement in which Kojima pledged he was still working hard on **The Phantom Pain** but made no mention of anything else beyond that.

This means that we have to wonder how this could affect the upcoming **Silent Hills**. The pant-wettingly terrifying **P.T.** demo had given us just a taste of what Kojima has in store but, if the rumours are true, we may not end up seeing the finished product as he intended. No mention of the game is made in any of the statements released thus far, which seems to indicate that Konami will be handing the IP over to somebody else, though nothing solid is confirmed as of writing.

Frankly we see no way that the **Metal Gear** series could continue without Hideo Kojima and will be immensely disappointed if this means that **Silent Hills** runs into issues as well. Bad news all round if it really is the case.

COMING SOON



ARKHAM KNIGHT

PLATFORM: MULTI

RELEASE DATE: JUNE 23RD

The summertime lull is in true effect this year, and there is little in the way of real Triple A titles on the horizon. However, in Arkham Knight we have one of the most hotly anticipated games of the year coming out during a period where it will face little in the way of competition. The final chapter in the Arkham series is sure to maintain the level of quality that the previous games have gained a reputation for and will make for a great last ride with this version of the Caped Crusader. This is the must-have game of the summer for sure.

Harley Quinn Story Pack Details Revealed

With **Arkham Knight** just around the corner (see last page), anticipation for the latest of Batman's video game adventures is at an all-time high. However, fans of Harley Quinn will also have plenty to cheer about after a recent Amazon description revealed that her story pack DLC for the game will take place at the Blüdhaven Police Department and appears to revolve around her attempts to bust Poison Ivy out of the slammer.

The DLC will mark the first time in the series that fans will be able to take control of the psychotic Joker ally, with the statement on Amazon relating to the DLC adding: "With this exclusive Story Pack experience events in the lead-up to **Arkham Knight** as you infiltrate Blüdhaven to rescue your partner in crime: Poison Ivy. Delve deep into Harley's demented nature and utilise her devastating baseball bat to smash, crash and bash your way to a friend very much in need."

No further details are available at the moment, and it will be interesting to see how Rocksteady adjust the gameplay mechanics to suit what must be a fairly unique playstyle for Harley. Discovering the nature of her relationship with Poison Ivy in the DLC will also give fans plenty of reasons to throw down a little extra of their hard-earned.

COMING SOON



ONE PIECE PIRATE WARRIORS 3

PLATFORM: MULTI

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2015

One for fans of the anime here, as **One Piece Pirate Warriors 3** promises massive improvements on the previous games in the series. With a huge cast of characters and a revamped battle system that sees the introduction of additional techniques and support fighters who can be brought into the battle when needed, it likely isn't going to be hugely popular upon release but should achieve a dedicated cult following. Already available in Japan, it is believed it should arrive on Western shores at some point in the summer.

COMING SOON



GODZILLA

PLATFORM: PS3, PS4

RELEASE DATE: Q2 2015

This has been a long time coming for Western gamers, as **Godzilla** was released in Japan at the tail end of last year. Rather than being based on last year's film, this game looks like it will take inspiration from practically everything **Godzilla**, which may make it an essential purchase for fans of the Japanese films in particular. Featuring a range of game modes, including stages where the player can wreak havoc with the titular monster and others where they can do battle with other famed monsters from the series, if it can live up to the promise it will be something special.

UNCHARTED 4 Delayed

Sony fans will have a little less reason to be cheerful over the festive period as it has been announced that the latest in the **Uncharted** series is going to be delayed until the spring of 2016, instead of being released at the end of 2015 as first anticipated.

Game director Neil Druckmann announced the delay with the following post on the PlayStation blog: "Since we showed you our first gameplay reveal of **Uncharted 4: A Thief's End**, more of the game and story have come together, and it's become clear to us that this game is much more ambitious than we originally envisioned."

"After spending so many years with Nathan Drake, he means a lot to the team, and telling the climactic chapter of his adventures is a task we don't take lightly — this game deserves every bit of the attention to detail, precise pacing, and nuanced storytelling Naughty Dog is known for. So we've made the difficult choice of pushing the game's release date."

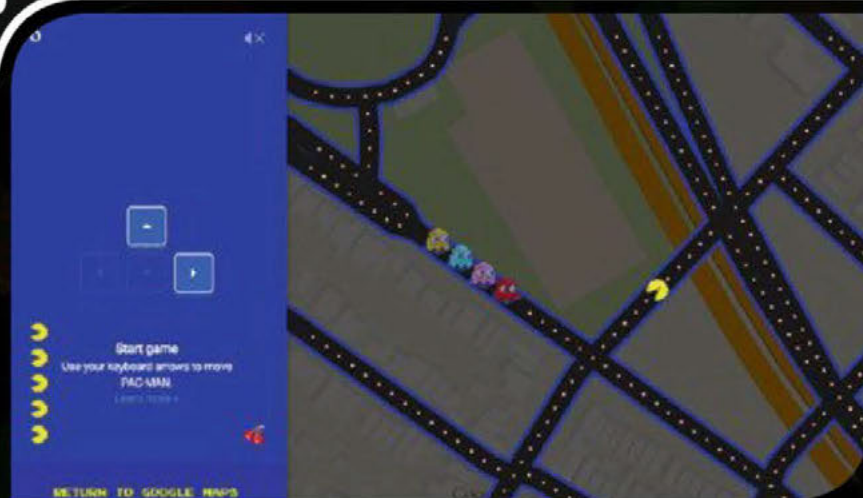
Similarly to the **Zelda** situation, if the delay does improve the game and gives them time to iron out the wrinkles then this is definitely a good thing. Unfortunately, it does mean that the holiday period looks set to be dominated by the undeserving likes of the next iterations in the **Call of Duty** and **Assassin's Creed** series yet again.

New ZELDA Hit with Delay

Wii U fans will also have to wait a little bit longer to get their hands on the latest instalment in the **Zelda** franchise as it has been announced that the game has been pushed back to spring of next year. A video released by Eiji Aonuma, who is the producer of the series, also stated that the game won't be demonstrated at E3 this year.

In the video, Aonuma states: "As I have watched our development progress, I have come to think that rather than work with meeting a specific schedule as our main objective, and releasing a game that reflects only what we can create within that scheduled time, I feel strongly that our focus should be to bring all these ideas to life in a way that will make **The Legend of Zelda** on Wii U the best game it can possibly be."

That is a very admirable statement and one that a few of today's bigger developers should take note of (*cough*Ubisoft*cough*) but a delay is obviously not the greatest news for **Zelda** fans. However, if it results in the creation of a better game, it will be a lot easier to forgive Nintendo for taking their time with it.



Play PAC-MAN on Google Maps

It's an idea of such genius that we can't believe it wasn't done years ago. At the time of writing, it is possible to turn any area on Google Maps into a **Pac-Man** level by clicking a little icon at the bottom left of the page.

The button will zoom into the location you currently have highlighted and line the streets with dots, allowing you to play the classic game. It even has ghosts and power pills to emulate the experience more fully. The only requirement is that the part of the map you are looking at has enough streets to create a level.

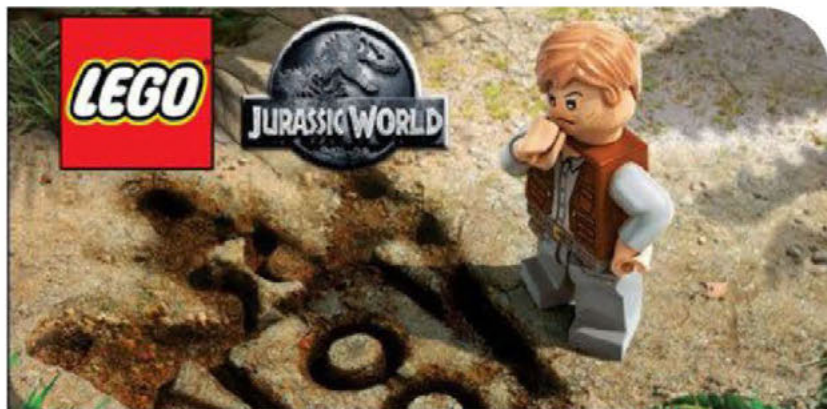
The feature appeared just before April 1st so many thought it may be a little April Fools gag, but it seems to be sticking around, and we hope that it does for a lot longer, as we can see many an hour being lost to this little slice of updated retro gaming genius.

HALO 5: GUARDIANS Release Date Announced

A new advert for the latest in the **Halo** franchise has revealed that the game will hit stores on October 27th. The game will shift some of the focus to a new character named Spartan Locke, though Master Chief will also play a big role in the proceedings, despite the fact that the story revolves around the fact that he has gone missing.

As usual it will be a Xbox exclusive and the game is sure to please fans of the series. Whether it will offer anything to convince those who have gotten a little bored with the franchise to come back remains to be seen, but maybe bringing a new character into the fold could spark some additional interest.

COMING SOON



LEGO JURASSIC WORLD

PLATFORM: PS3, PS4, VITA, XBOX 360, XBOX ONE, Wii U, 3DS, PC
RELEASE DATE: JUNE 2015

Barely a month goes by without the team behind the **LEGO** games taking on yet another property. This time around it is **Jurassic World** that gets the bricked treatment and gamers can expect more of the same trademark humour and fairly simple gameplay, except this time it's spread over all of the films in the **Jurassic** franchise. At times, it seems like the **LEGO** games are trying to appeal to every corner of the market, and it has to be said they are doing a good job. It will be unspectacular, but you can guarantee there will be plenty to enjoy for fans of the films.

COMING SOON



PAYDAY 2: CRIMEWAVE EDITION

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE

RELEASE DATE: 12TH JUNE 2015

For those who like a little cooperative crime as part of their gameplay, Payday 2 was the perfect tonic as it allowed gamers to participate in heists and various other illicit activities with their friends or an A.I. gang if need be. The Crimewave Edition brings the series to the current generation of consoles and will feature all of the add-on content that has been released for Payday 2 thus far. It is definitely worth checking out, especially for fans of GTA V's heist missions.

Nintendo Enters the Mobile Gaming Market

One of the last bastions of pure gaming has fallen as Nintendo has announced a deal with a publisher called DeNA that will see the company enter the mobile sector and join every other developer that is crawling all over themselves to make as much cash as possible from very boring games.

The company has previously ignored the very profitable mobile sector in favour of pushing its own hardware and proper games. However, with the new deal we may see a proliferation of the sort of tappy-tappy mobile gunk that make this particular sector of the industry so popular and so utterly devoid of real merit.

Happily, it seems that's not the path Nintendo are going to be taking, at least if you take the words of Satoru Iwata at face value. When speaking about the deal he commented: "We have no intention at all to port existing game titles for dedicated game platforms to smart devices because if we cannot provide our consumers with the best possible play experiences, it would just ruin the value of Nintendo's IP."

So that's good news for Nintendo console owners and hopefully good news in regards to the mobile games they will eventually produce, though we have to wonder just what the deal actually means if not to bring existing IP over.

THE LATEST
GAMING RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



BLOODBORNE

DEVELOPER: FROM SOFTWARE / PUBLISHER: SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT / PLATFORM: PS4 / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Right off of the bat, you can tell that Bloodborne is a Hidetaka Miyazaki creation, following in the vein of his work with the Dark Souls franchise. You're a lone warrior inflicted by a plague, wandering across a lone city in search of a cure. Hounded by degenerates and monsters, devolved remnants of a better time, and risking losing your humanity. Second verse, same as the first. This said, it provides enough interesting twists to still truly stand out on its own.

The chief change this time is the overall setting, shifting from a medieval decaying world passing into a dark age to the Victorian-esque decaying city of Yharnam. Beautifully bleak and ruined to perfection, Yharnam itself is one of the most thematic locations rendered by From Software to date. Inspired by the likes of Dracula, it rivals titles such as Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs in its aged artistic aesthetics. More than that, the monsters themselves have a far greater thematic coherency than Dark Souls as a result of the era.

Mechanically, the most immediately notable change stems from the addition of firearms. Serving in part as a replacement for shields, these weapons are not there to cherry tap enemy opponents to death so much as more immediately counter and interrupt attacks. It significantly speeds up combat and makes for far more damaging combos, yet can lead to complacency which can catch players' off guard. Not to

mention encouraging the ever-present risk/reward system dominating the experience points of these games.

The very act of healing itself relies upon skill combat. While not quite replicating Space Marine's health regenerating stunning strikes, you can recover health by damaging foes for a few moments after being sliced open. This encourages commitment to fights and you'll really find yourself pushed into trying to win battles against almost impossible odds.

The chief failing here unfortunately comes down to some surprisingly poor optimisation. Thirty frames per second was to be expected, but an astounding number of locations have it dropping to twenty or even ten at times. In a game where

timing is so crucial, this can lead to many truly frustrating ends. In addition, some surprisingly lengthy loading times between deaths can result in tedious breaks between battles, often risking ruining any sense of immersion. Well, that and the very broad ye olde London accents.

Is Bloodborne the killer app for PS4 everyone has been hungering for? Probably not, but much like Mario Kart 4 on the Wii U, it's enough to justify a purchase when combined with the hits already available. If you're after a hardcore do-or-die experience, this will be well worth your time.

CALLUM SHEPARD



9



STARBURST



DARK SOULS II: SCHOLAR OF THE FIRST SIN

DEVELOPER: FROM SOFTWARE / PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI GAMES / PLATFORM: XBOX 360, XBOX ONE, PS3, PS4, PC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The infamously hard fantasy-come-survival horror franchise comes to next gen consoles for the first time, its most recent effort upgraded and added to with its Scholar of the First Sin. Wait, what? Survival horror? Well, sure, Dark Souls II won't be giving the likes of Resident Evil much to worry about any time soon, but there's so much more at stake – as anyone who has ever, say, accidentally dropped over the side of a cliff and lost several thousand souls as a result, will surely testify.

Telltale may be doing a sterling job with their Game of Thrones adaptation, but, for our money, Dark Souls II comes far closer to capturing the atmosphere of life in Westeros than anything before. After all, it's punishingly cruel, doesn't care how hard you've travelled to get where you are now, and will kill you without a moment's warning. The stories are entirely true – playing Dark Souls II, you will die. All the time. In that respect, it gives the perfect experience of being a Stark in Westeros or Sean Bean in almost everything. It's like a Fighting Fantasy gamebook in which the dice are consistently weighted against you.

And yet, there is method to the game's madness. It does a good job of easing players into the world of Drangelic, with a reasonably prolonged introduction and tutorial section. From there, you'll progress to its hub town of Majula, where you can purchase character and weapon upgrades and seek advice from the mysterious Emerald Herald, who acts as a sort of guide, dispensing vague pointers and veiled history lessons. Expect nothing spelled out, though – with not so much as an onscreen map to aid you on your decidedly not-so-merry way. There's a reason most of the friendly NPCs of Drangelic can be found sitting around with their heads in their hands – it's a thoroughly depressing place to be, like an ugly Skyrim crossed with a Fallout game.

It has moments of prettiness (Majula is deceptively beautiful, in a Lovecraftian kind of way) but where Skyrim feels massive and expansive, so much of this is blocked-off and linear. Dark Souls II is a big game, but exploration isn't as high on the list of priorities as levelling up, staying alive and occasionally trying to kill a behemoth boss or two while you're there.

"...The hell am I fighting that," you'll say, crossing paths with its gigantic boss bastards, running for the nearest (and invariably now blocked) exit. But fight it, you will, and, believe it or not, sometimes you'll actually win. The combat to Dark Souls II is best approached like a puzzle – learn your enemies' weaknesses and rhythms, and soon you'll learn that it's a game which is firm but, ultimately, fair. Not that it seems so at the time, punishing for every slip-up or loss of life. "I hate you!" you'll cry, switching off in a rage, but you'll be back. Nothing feels quite so rewarding as finally finishing off a foe you've sunk hours into fighting, cursing every step of the way.

For those who've already played and completed the game during its previous iteration, the new material consists of

some re-jigged enemies (having moved around on the maps since you last played) and sharper-looking graphics. Whether that's worth the price of a double-dip will depend on one's level of passion for the game (which can go sky-high for some fans of the Souls series) but most would be recommended seeking out the recent Bloodborne instead, or waiting for it to come down in price somewhat.

For everyone else, however, Dark Souls II is one hell of a gaming experience. It's frustrating, esoteric and steadfast and it's refusal to pander to a larger audience. More casual gamers and those who stink at video games won't have quite so much fun, and its fans will probably already own it, but otherwise, Scholar of the First Sin is a tremendous, remarkable game. By which I also mean, depending on precisely when you ask, it's frustrating and cruel and either one of the best or worst video games ever played.

JOEL HARLEY

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



STARBURST



DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY – DEFINITIVE EDITION

DEVELOPER: NINJA THEORY / PUBLISHER: CAPCOM / PLATFORM: XBOX ONE, PS4 / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Originally hurtling onto the scene wreathed in controversy, DmC: Devil May Cry is an especially charged topic to this day. Between a massive revamp and Chief Designer Tameem Antoniades performing a one man PR suicide campaign, the old guard were not especially receptive to this new take on the franchise. Now, two years on, the Definitive Edition sadly does little to improve upon its staggering flaws.

The most egregious failing of DmC: Devil May Cry remains

its story and thoroughly unlikeable protagonist. While you still play as Dante, you still kill demons, yet much of the series' playful fun seems to have been sucked from the game. Rather than embracing the "flock off featherface" degree of dumb humour, what's here is a very bad retelling of They Live. One which sadly takes itself all too seriously, with its allegedly edgy message beaten repeatedly over the player's head, only pausing to have Dante scream obscenities. The only time it might provoke

a real smirk of amusement is when the supposedly Definitive Edition's cutscenes de-synch with their audio thanks to running at 60 FPS.

Unfortunately a modern and fully up to date frame-rate doesn't help save the Definitive Edition thanks to its horribly flawed combat. Streamlined to the point of robbing the game of all complexity, gone are the varying styles, the weapon variety is kept to a bare minimum and combat made exceedingly easy. Rather than rewarding effort, instead "S" and "A" ranks are something an experienced player could achieve in their sleep, and the bosses themselves are uninspired at best. Even genuinely great ideas such as rapidly switching weapons are hamstrung thanks to the terrible decision to add enemies which are immune to half of Dante's arsenal.

If there is one thing to praise, it's that DmC's artistic direction is truly inspired. The warped dimensions and half destroyed buildings make for a truly beautifully twisted locale to battle demons, and the focus here was on the combat. Avoiding the puzzle problems

or poor platforming of past games, what we had here was focused primarily upon the combat, with other elements streamlined or slimmed down. Sadly, however, relying so much upon exclusively the combat made its flaws all the more notable, and left nothing to make up for Team Ninja's failings.

DmC: Devil May Cry remains the Dead Rising 3 of its franchise. It fails to understand what made past games work, it's almost embarrassed by its predecessor's style and in avoiding it the game is reduced to a soulless experience. Not bad enough to be notable, but not nearly good enough to be worth remembering. Save your money for Bayonetta.

CALLUM SHEPARD



OCEANHORN: MONSTER OF UNCHARTED SEAS

DEVELOPER: CORNFOX & BROTHERS / PUBLISHER: FDG ENTERTAINMENT / PLATFORM: PC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Oceanhorn: Monster of Uncharted Seas is definitely an enjoyable game, but it's not one that can claim to be original. An action-adventure game set in a fictional land of magic, secrets and danger, Oceanhorn: MoUS isn't just paying homage to Nintendo's classic The Legend of Zelda series – its similarities, style of gameplay and storyline can occasionally run a little too close for comfort.

The game begins with a father leaving his son to battle the legendary Oceanhorn, the last of three sea monsters who once terrorised the land. After finding Dad's sword and shield and Mum's special necklace, it's now our boy-protagonist's job to find out what happened, collect three Sacred Emblems from around the world, and defeat Oceanhorn. With islands, temples and caves to explore, emblems to collect,

and the legendary Triloth of power to find, MoUS follows the tried-and-tested formula seen in most Zelda games, and although it's something a lot of gamers are going to be familiar with, it's not necessarily a bad thing.

One of the most striking things about MoUS is its stunning visuals. With bright colours, beautiful textures and a look of complete smoothness, the game doesn't fall short on appearance. Yes, it does look a little bit like Zelda's Windwaker, especially when you're travelling on a boat across vast ocean landscapes, but it is a beautiful game nonetheless.

Combat in the game is pretty smooth, and fighting enemies is actually a lot of fun. The simplicity of the controls make it easy enough to attack and shield yourself, but enemies can still knock you off guard, forcing you to think before you slash and making for fun, yet occasionally challenging, battles. Another of the game's biggest elements is puzzle-solving. From moving blocks onto switches to finding hidden keys, solving puzzles in MoUS is incredibly easy if you're familiar with any Zelda game. Puzzles work well here, but they're

about as much of a challenge as smashing pots or chopping grass, which are actually things you can do in-game too.

Exploring the many islands, discovering secrets and hidden locations, collecting coins, items and more make this game incredibly compelling. It might not be something new, but it's nice to see some of the best elements of gaming, like exciting and intuitive level design and interesting enemies, come together in a setting that isn't Hyrule. Sure, it's pretty close, and true Zelda fans might have a few issues (Triloth does sound a bit like Triforce...), but once you get past that, MoUS has a lot to offer.

Despite its many similarities to one of Nintendo's best-loved franchises, Oceanhorn: Monster of Uncharted Seas is still highly enjoyable. The smooth gameplay, beautiful graphics and huge areas to explore make it a game that's really fun to play. Fans of The Legend of Zelda might not find anything new in playing it, but with so much to offer this is a game that's sure to please a lot of gamers.

LARA BROWN

WARHAMMER DEATHWATCH — TYRANID INVASION —



INTERVIEW: BEN MURCH - RODEO GAMES

Fresh off of their success bringing WARHAMMER QUEST to the PC, Rodeo Games have been tasked with bringing another property to iOS. This time set in the grim darkness of the far future, DEATHWATCH: TYRANID INVASION sees players commanding the forces of the Ordo Xenos. Unique among all Space Marine forces, the Deathwatch itself recruits from other chapters, taking the brightest and boldest among them to face the worst threats alien species can throw at humanity. Organised into strike teams and equipped with a vast number of relic weapons, they are the militant arm of the Inquisition's alien hunters. Set in the Astolat Sector as it is being consumed by Hive Fleet Leviathan, the Deathwatch is attempting to hold the line against the innumerable Tyranid threat and anything it might unearth. We sat down to speak with Co-Founder of Rodeo Games Ben Murch to get further details about what players could expect from their game...

STARBURST: Being Games Workshop's poster boy army, most video game outings have seen the Space Marines take front and centre stage. This has been especially true in recent years with *Dawn of War*, *Space Marine* and *Space Hulk: Ascension*. Given the Deathwatch's unique nature, what have you done to put a new spin on this army mechanically?

BEN MURCH: It's interesting, because the coolest feature of Space Marines has always been the various chapters they come from. I wonder how different the game "Space Marine" would have been if you played as a Blood Angel or an Iron Fist. Different motivations, stories, skills... all sorts. We get to explore that concept in *Deathwatch*. How do these characters fit together? What happens when a Space Wolf fights alongside an Ultramarine? How does that impact on fighting skills and tactics? Most importantly, how does it change the way you approach different missions?

Given the variety of Chapters available to the Deathwatch, can you reveal much about which Space Marines players will be able to recruit? The trailer showed a number of First Founding Astartes, notably the Space Wolves and Ultramarines, but are you also covering some of the less prominent Chapters such as the Excoriators or Raptors? Can we also expect any Chapter specific stats bonuses for certain marines?

Initially, there are around 40 different marines to collect in *Deathwatch*. These all hail from three core chapters, Ultramarine, Space Wolf and Blood Angel. We wanted to give the player a breadth of choice and strategy when picking their squad though, so there are multiple classes, veterans and even heroes in the mix. Each marine has a unique mixture of active and passive skills to unlock by earning xp. For example, a Blood Angel Assault marine has passive skills to help him get into combat more quickly, along with an active skill that cleaves multiple enemies in front of him. However, an Ultramarine Master of Relics has passive skills that support long range fire along with an activated bonus to all other Ultramarines.

Choice is the key in *Deathwatch*. If you want to send an entire squad of Space Wolf Assault marines armed with Power Fists, Hand Flamers and shields... you can! Equally, you may want to just use Devastators armed with Lascannons and grenades. It's all about finding the right combination for you.

Whilst it is fun in the early missions, this all becomes increasingly important on the higher difficulty levels!

What of the Tyranids then? With their main advantage being to evolve over time and adapt to enemy weapons, will we see new bio-forms emerging throughout the

campaign? Will they possibly adapt heightened resistances to certain weapons should players be complacent and repeatedly use Kill-Teams armed with nothing but, say, plasma rifles?

Well, there certainly are a lot of Tyranid enemies to hack your way through. Throughout the campaign we introduce different types with different abilities. These really change how you have to approach the missions. A good example is when you first encounter a Tyrant Guard. Of course, they have huge defensive carapaces shielding the front of their torsos, so marines do a hugely reduced amount of damage when attacking from the front. The key is to flank them and shoot their sides.

I mentioned the higher difficulty levels before. These come into effect once you've completed the campaign. It is then available to play through again on difficulty level 2. Not only does this mean much tougher enemies that hit harder, they also come with skills. These can range from stunning your marines, to cancelling out their active abilities.

...And if players get through that, then they have difficulty level 3 to look forward to!

Obviously there is quite a variety of weapons on hand, with your promotional shots depicting Tactical, Assault and Devastator marines alike. This said, will players be able to gradually develop the marines themselves and increase their abilities over time, and will there be the risk of permanent deaths à la XCOM: Enemy Unknown?

Yes, you can improve and develop your marines over time. Each mission your marines complete earns them xp. This is then stored per marine in their xp bank. All upgrades to your marine cost xp. However some things cost more than others, so you may have to save up over several missions to get that one really cool skill. We don't have perma-death in the game, instead if any marine dies on a mission, his xp bank is emptied. It creates this really cool risk/reward system which actually makes you stop and think about who you take into risky missions. "This marine has 30,000xp in his bank, and I only need 500 more to afford that skill... maybe I won't take him on this suicide mission against a Hive Tyrant!"

Will we be seeing any ability for squad members to influence others in any way or link abilities? Perhaps for Tactical marines to initiate sustained fire on a target and pin them down for an Assault marine, or others to act as spotters for Devastators? Will any variety of leaders, say a Forge Master, offer any buffs to the rest of the unit while leading them?

There are certain Active Skills the high level heroes have which affect other marines in their chapter or class. However, other marines can gain similar buffs by using wargear. There are over 200 items of wargear in *Deathwatch*. Once again, this is giving the player the choice to compose whatever squad they like. There are many many grenades, shields, purity

seals, weapon attachments, and other items to choose from when customising your marines.

Turn-based strategy has been one of the far more successful genres to be translated to iOS. Are there any specific inspirations you would cite from other video games which helped shape *Deathwatch: Tyranid Invasion* and its mechanics?

Our earlier games have been a huge part in laying the path for *Deathwatch*. In fact, we all see this game as a spiritual successor to our *Hunters* games. It uses a similar system to the Action Points we developed for those games.

Of course, we all play lots and lots of games, so I'm sure lots of inspiration comes from those. There are elements of collectability from *Puzzles and Dragons* (iOS), boss fights from *Hearthstone* and even a little something from *Dark Souls*.

What about from other Games Workshop licences? Being one of Fantasy Flight Games' four major Warhammer 40,000 RPGs, we've seen a great deal of fully fleshed out lore, ranks and operational methods in smaller squad based combat. The same can be said of Steve Parker's novels following Kill-Team Talon. Would you say that either of these had much influence on *Tyranid Invasion's* development?

I actually read through all the Fantasy Flight *Deathwatch* books when we started the project. It's really important to see what's been done before and how the license was handled. Also a little bit daunting, as that RPG is very cool indeed. They also suffer from a similar problem we have which is player-driven creation of marines. Unlike in stories about very defined characters, games like ours and the pen and paper *Deathwatch* give the player freedom to create their own squad and tell their own stories. This requires more focus on the setting and situations, so that players have the freedom to imprint on their marines. Seeing how pen and paper RPG's do that actually helped a lot when designing our storytelling system.

Obviously the Tyranids themselves are going to be the big threat here, but will



So that's what the inside of a Hive Ship looks like...

we see any other threats emerging to fight the players? In a previous interview with Pocket Tactics you gave a rather interesting hint, stating "Who knows what ancient evil or foreign technology they may disturb along their way."

Can we expect anything from the Dark Mechanicus or Necrons to show up? Or even something more directly Tyranid related such as Genestealer Cults? Tyranids are the big threat in this game. However, the Astolat sector is a large and dangerous place. We aren't really talking about what we're up to after this game, but you can place a pretty safe bet on some other foes rearing their heads.

So far we know that the Deathwatch will be fighting in the Astolat Sector while it is being digested by Hive Fleet Leviathan. Early screenshots have featured very arid environments, underground facilities and, going from your trailer, the innards of some Tyranid creature. Can you reveal much more about the variety of maps and locations players can be expected to visit, or the story behind the sector?

Well, part of the fun is discovering these environments, so I wouldn't want to spoil that. You do venture into various Hive Ships though. That was a really challenging section of development, as

there really isn't much graphic information on what the inside of a Hive Ship looks like. There was a fair amount of back and forth between us and Games Workshop, and we all finally hit a really cool place with it.

The Astolat Sector itself is our area of 40k space to do what we like with... within reason of course! It's a place that is habited fairly successfully by humankind. The entire sector is formed around a dangerous and beautiful nebula cluster of stars called "The Lantern". Unfortunately, it's this same light cluster that has attracted the attention of the Tyranids. Normally the Inquisition would fall back from such a devoured sector. However, they have some reason for wanting to keep this area of space...

Given the fact the Deathwatch is under the direct command of the Inquisition, will players see the Ordo Xenos making their presence known in this game? Are there any times Inquisitors will be accompanying the squad or will the Deathwatch have access to their assets beyond the frontline, such as a Watch Fortress armoury or Biologis research lab to better study specimens for weaknesses or the like?

The Inquisition are very much in the background pulling the strings in this game. Who knows what future titles may hold in store though. Inquisitors accompanying squads? Watch Fortresses? Research labs? Terminator armour? There is literally so much that we love about the Universe that it's not physically possible for us to have time to do it all.

We would very much like to do more titles in this series, so who knows what might turn up in those...

Finally, will we see a negative status ailment on most Astartes titled "These Chapters can never be Ultramarines"? Haha, don't be silly.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

DEATHWATCH: TYRANID INVASION is slated for release in Summer 2015 on iOS, keep an eye on www.rodeogames.co.uk for future updates.



Suicide is painless... unless it involves a Hive Tyrant.

RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT
THE WORLD OF
RETRO GAMING
BY CHRIS JACKSON



MORE MOVIE MISTAKES

If you were here with us last month, you might remember we had a pop at *The Wizard of Oz* and *Indiana Jones*. As bad as both of those games are, there are plenty more awful movie tie-in games out there. As promised, here are a few more words of warning (or encouragement, depending which way you look at it) on some of the lesser-known 8 and 16-bit cash-ins that have been unleashed on the gaming world over the years...

Back to the Future (1989)

For a movie as iconic as this one, you'd really hope there might be a game to match. Sadly not, because what we have here is basically a vertically-scrolling collect 'em up. As the level scrolls by, you need to move your character (supposedly Marty McFly, but if we're honest by the looks of him it could be pretty much anyone in the universe) around the screen to collect clocks which prevent a "photograph" from fading out at the bottom of the screen, resulting in the loss of a life. Hula-hooping cheerleaders, workmen carrying invisible sheets of glass, bees, bins, benches and patches of oil all stand in your way, as you try to navigate around them to get these sodding clocks to a soundtrack consisting of a two-second riff that loops over and over and over...

Each stage has a time limit (which bizarrely isn't replenished by any of the

clocks you pick up), and hitting enemies results in Marty flinging himself to the ground and having some sort of seizure, which as you can imagine is a huge waste of precious seconds. It's actually possible to hit so many enemies that you won't even be able to make it to the end of the level in the time available, which is just absurd. Bowling balls can be picked up and used as projectiles which does break up the monotony very slightly, but for God's sake don't pick up the skateboard! In a game as uncontrollable as this, the last thing you

want is for your character to be moving even faster than he already is.

Wayne's World (1993)

Woah! A *Wayne's World* game? Yeahhh! Why have you never heard of it? Because it's terrible!

When we finally reach the other side of the gruelling opening "cutscene" that requires constant button presses to move the text along, the game starts inside a music store. Wayne is the only controllable character (Garth's been kidnapped, you see), and in this first level, you'll jump on snare drums and bongos to bounce your way around the store, collecting power-ups and shooting evil trombones and bagpipes with your guitar gun. It sounds incredible, and it really, *really* ought to be, but it just isn't. The controls are awkward, the collision detection might as well not even be there, and the music and sound effects are so repetitive you'll end up playing with the TV on mute.

Hold the remote, though, because there's a real treat in store at the end of this level! After beating the guitar monster, we join Wayne and Garth on the sofa for another one of those awful text-based cutscenes (which I accidentally just added a really [un-]suitable extra letter to. Glad I spotted that one!). Guess which scene from the movie is recreated in all its glory? Of course, it's the headbanging in the car bit! The worst - and I really do mean worst - version of *Bohemian Rhapsody* you've ever heard blares out of your speakers over what is essentially a two-frame



STARBURST

animated GIF of the lads in the car looking down then looking up again for as long as it takes you to mash the button enough times to move the game on.

A donut shop is up next, where either Wayne has been shrunk, or everything else is absolutely gigantic, and you run around the counters dodging killer coffee cups and dastardly donut men. Level three and four are basically just re-skinned versions of level one, set in a bar (where the end of level boss is Elvis Presley) and the "psychotic suburbs" in the sky respectively. It's almost fun if you can cope with its flaws, but please, please, please don't spend a load of money on it!

Total Recall (1990)

The more puerile among us will get a dick, sorry, kick, out of the so-called "wall of penises" hazard in the first level (hopefully pictured somewhere on these pages if our glorious leader gives it the all-clear), but apart from that the only thing you're getting with this one is a bland side-scrolling punch 'em up. One of those where it's nearly impossible to get close enough to the enemies to hit them without taking damage yourself, and where the controls are so awkward that being in the right place at the right time to attack them ends up being down to sheer luck rather than any kind of skill. There's a point where it's possible to find yourself being attacked from both sides of the screen by gun-toting bad guys firing endless streams of bullets. All you can do is crouch down to avoid their bullets - stand up, and you'll be shot to bits within seconds, so there's literally no way out. Great game! Wall of penises FTW!

The Karate Kid (1987)

Taking its cues from the first two *Karate Kid* films (because the others hadn't been made yet), the *Karate Kid* box art suggests by playing this game you will be able to "master the martial arts". Tell you what, if mastering the martial arts is as easy as doing a single punch and kick, then stick me in one of them white dressing gown



things right now and change my name to "sensei", because according to this game that's all it takes to reach the top of the crazy karate tree.

After a few introductory rounds of "combat" in a dojo, the first main level of the game takes you through Okinawa, kicking and punching endless amounts of stereotypical karate baddies until you reach the end. Some enemies will drop a "C" or a "D", which can be collected to add a single "crane kick" or "drum punch" attack to your arsenal. You don't get to choose when you want to use these attacks though - pick one up, and your next press of the kick or punch button will unleash one of these "special" moves. All enemies can be defeated by a single regular attack though, so the addition of these extra moves offers absolutely no benefit whatsoever.

Stage two is pretty much identical to stage one, except now there's a storm going on, so you're constantly being pushed backwards across the screen fighting against the elements. And, of course, now there's loads of deadly litter and sticks and stuff flying around the screen as well, just to remind you that it's got a bit windy. Make it to the end of this level, and there's only

one more to go before you're at the end of the game and its super-underwhelming endgame 8-bit close-up of Mr Miyagi. You might ask yourself if it was really worth it. The answer is "no".

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes (1991)

This is sort of cheating because the *Killer Tomatoes* game is based on the animated series rather than the actual film, but sod it. It's been on the "mention this at some point" list for ages now, and this is as good a place as any.

One of about nineteen million platformers that were released in the early '90s, this is possibly one of the worst. The title screen is admittedly gorgeous, but it's all downhill from there. Your mission, should you wish to accept it, is to stop an evil scientist from unleashing his "Doomsday Tomato" upon the world. To do this, you'll have to work your way through some disgusting gaudily-coloured levels (the nausea-inducing flickering red and green "waves" in the sewer level are a sight to behold), jumping on tomatoes and erm... that's about it really. Squashing the little red buggers is a trial and a half on its own, as you have to land on them in just the right spot otherwise you'll lose health. Dead ends, platforms that lead to often useless items, backtracking and those *backgrounds* are enough to test the willpower of almost any gamer, and the "soundtrack" will make you wish for an immediate loss of hearing...

True Lies, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, *Lethal Weapon*, *Terminator*, *The Matrix*, *Toys*, *Home Alone*, *Last Action Hero*, *Waterworld*, *The Crow* (*City Of Angels* for some reason), *Dick Tracy*... The list of bad movie games truly is immense. Some of these will undoubtedly be covered in future columns, but we'll get back to something a bit more positive next month to make up for all the moaning that's been going on recently. Come back in a few weeks' time to see what we've found to cheer ourselves up with!

THE KARATE KID



ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE
GUIDES YOU
THROUGH THE
REALM OF
TABLETOP GAMING



Movement is handled by a clever hinged ruler that has spokes on it. The spokes allow you to align the base of the model with the rule, so you always get accurate movement. hilariously, each capital ship has a limited speed and will plough on at that speed unless you give the order not to. The thing is, the bigger the ship, the harder it is to give accurate orders. The Star Destroyer has to be given orders three turns ahead. This is done using clever little stackable 'cups' that you put the orders in. This means that if you misjudged, your ship could be moving too slowly in the middle of a firefight, or so quickly that it goes off the board and out of the game. Get it wrong, and you'll be scattering your own TIE Fighters while ploughing into the side of a Nebulon-B Frigate. Which I keep doing because I'm terrible at planning. Better yet, when we tried it with two Star Destroyers (using two sets), we ended up sliding over each other. This was awesome and disastrous. (They don't ram – they sort of scrape, which is even more fun as things fall off and explode.)

Other orders include ship repairs and making fighters more effective. You can also demand to go all weapons blazing, which does extra nasty damage. This is cleverly handled. Firstly, the damage is dealt with using cards that flip over for critical hits. (Like every FFG game out there). Different types of ships can deal with damage in different ways because they have different range and different firing arcs, all of which is clearly laid

If you've been reading this column regularly, you've probably gathered that I tend to go completely nuts for well-created space combat games, having grown up playing the likes of *Silent Death* and *Battlefleet Gothic*. As you may be able to predict, I have gone completely nuts for *Star Wars: Armada*. Fantasy Flight Games have pulled the same trick that they pulled with *Star Wars: Imperial Assault*. They used the *Star Wars* franchise as a way to safely and successfully launch an utterly killer miniatures combat game that will go on to dominate the market.

When you think about it, *Imperial Assault* is a spot on, extremely well put together miniatures skirmish game that completely and totally outshines similar products in the field. There are plenty of very good skirmish games out there, but only one of them lets you wield a lightsaber. *Star Wars: Armada* pulls the same trick, but with Star Destroyers and X-Wings. The main set came out very recently and like hordes of other gamers, I was eager to get my hands on it. Unlike many of you though, I'd already played a few sneaky demo games at various events, so I was pretty hyped up on the release. Despite my bitter and cynical soul, I find *Armada* to be very good.

Firstly, it's worth pointing out that *Armada* is a fleet combat game; it's all about the big capital ships battering the stuffing out of each other while hordes of fighters provide a screen for the artillery. This is not a fighter combat game like *X-Wing*, it's literally on a different scale. Which means you get to throw many, many TIE fighters at your enemies while cackling like an evil sorcerer. Well, you do if you're me. It also means that it's mostly about the capital ships.

The basic game itself is very, very pretty, but that should come as no surprise. Fantasy Flight are wizards when it comes to components, and I don't think I've ever seen them produce an ugly game. The ships themselves are quite lovely. The basic set comes with three capital ships. One rebel corvette, a one rebel frigate, and an Imperial Star Destroyer. Yes, that means you can reenact the opening scene of the *A New Hope* with the models. They're nicely painted, well produced and surprisingly light. The fighters are small and fiddly, but are on natty little stands. Fans of *Call to Arms* will remember how small fighters can get, and though it's not that bad, the stands certainly help.



STARBURST

out. The dice are what we've come to expect from an FFG game. Rather than numbers, they have special symbols on them which denote different effects. This way you don't have to look up a table or anything, just count the symbols and apply the damage. Different types of dice do different things (mostly, you want the red dice, although they go boom most often.) Of course, the set has just enough dice in it. They always do (and you'll probably find yourself shelling out for another bag of custom dice.) Damage to the ships can be dealt with in different ways; each ship has a limited number of shields, repair stations and the more agile ships can even dodge. It's possible to redistribute damage as well, and the Star Destroyer is a beast for this; you can send squadrons of X-Wings up its back in an attempt to blow it up and yet somehow all you seem to hit is the cafeteria and the swimming pool.

Mind you, don't try and blow up a Star Destroyer with a handful of X-Wings; they'll get swarmed by TIE Fighters in short order and then you won't have anything to defend your ships with. Fighters seem to be best use when they're either dogfighting each other or sucking up damage intended for your bigger ships. That said, get enough lucky shots in and you can do enough harm to your opponent to make them run away. Better yet, cards allow you to have better squadrons; you can decide that your X-Wings are being led by Luke or that your TIE fighters have the legendary Cívé Rashon on their side. (If you've just gone 'who?', don't worry. She's from the Expanded Universe. I suspect FFG are saving Darth Vader for a future expansion.) Oddly enough, Luke is a really good pilot.

It's very much a Fantasy Flight Game; lots of very simple mechanics that stack into and onto each other in order to



(PHOTO - ANNE DAVIES)

Let the Wookiee win...

produce a greater (and potentially more interesting) game. Quick to pick up and devilish to master, it's as different from *X-Wing* as it is from *Imperial Assault* or even *Arkham Horror*. At the core of it though, we have a solid starship combat game, with sensible rules being produced by a company that are smart enough to avoid power creep. It's already proving highly popular; it's the sell-out game of the year so far, and the brand it's based on is incredibly famous. Could it be that there is finally an intricate game of space

opera-style battles that won't vanish after a few years?

It does feel like it. Even better, it does feel like they won't easily run out of ideas. The launch of *Scum and Villainy* for *X-Wing* was cleverly staged, and that faction really works. Will *Armada* also have a scum faction? It's entirely do-able though there aren't an awful lot of capital ships in the Hutt family. That said, we haven't seen what *The Force Awakens*, the new movie, has to offer.

What we can pretty much guarantee in the short term is lots and lots of Imperial and Rebel ships. There's enough variation in those two factions to begin with, and then there's plenty of stuff to mine from the prequels as well. What's almost certainly guaranteed at some point is a Death Star. So far, FFG hasn't produced any super-massive models for their *Star Wars* games, but *Armada* practically demands one. I have to admit I'm a little concerned about that; for a start, that thing is totally going to roll from the table, and it'll be a little disappointing if it's only a hemisphere.

Overall though, unless someone else produces an equivalent *Star Trek* game with better rules, then *Armada* is set to be the dominant game when it comes to space fleet conflict. Its opposition is either too old (such as the case with the venerable and too complex *Star Fleet Battles*) or out of print and never coming back into production (which is the problem with *Battlefleet Gothic*). The truth is that *Star Wars: Armada* is the unstoppable juggernaut; it's even got its own Star Destroyer to prove it.



Ed Fortune can be tweeted at [@ed_fortune](#) and contacted via ed.fortune@starburstmagazine.com

WATTO'S EMPORIUM

STUFF WE LIKED FROM
AROUND THE WEB
THIS MONTH WITH
JACK BOTTOMLEY



DOG AND BONE

To say that new **Doctor Who** merchandise has hit the market is about as shocking a statement as saying the sun has risen today or that a sequel to **Fifty Shades of Grey** is being planned. However, in the case of this newest piece of kit, the dreams of many who have followed The Doctor over the years have indeed come true. Yes, finally your smartphone has found a purpose (other than all those apps and what not) in bringing to life your very own, manoeuvrable K-9 - the robotic dog devised by Dave Martin and Bob Baker (who is interviewed about the much-loved mechanic mutt, among other things, in this very issue on page 98). First appearing in the Series 15 serial, **The Invisible Enemy**, K-9 is one of the Doctor's many companions over the years and now he can be your companion too.

For £69.99, this K-9 can indeed be yours, via **Forbidden Planet** and through the Bluetooth on your flashy phone (phone not included - for all those optimists out there), you can control your K-9 Mark I and delve ever deeper into being the most dedicated Whovian in the galaxy. You could even dress up like Tom Baker's Doctor and act out an episode... or not... either way, "Your silliness is noted".

SMARTPHONE OPERATED K-9 - £69.99 / AVAILABLE (PRE-ORDER) FROM FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK

IT'S TEA JIM...

Mugs can be good, mugs can be great, but few mugs dare venture as boldly as this nifty series of **Star Trek** mugs from **alltheheroes.co.uk**, which are the perfect way to fondly remember those days sat gazing at the TV with your fake Vulcan ears plonked either side of your head (thank you once again for the memories, Mister Nimoy!). The collection showcases the various **Star Trek** insignia and are available in Black, Commander Gold, Engineering Red and Science Blue. We

ask you, what other mug range allows you to allocate your very own beverage Enterprise? These mugs are a great gift for the Trekkie in your life, or indulge yourself, even. When it comes to your coffee, you can now sieve the strong and prosper [I'll take mine with less corn... - Ed] with this Trektacular mug range. Cue hand signal.

STAR TREK (INSIGNIA BLACK) MUG
STAR TREK (COMMANDER GOLD) MUG
STAR TREK (SCIENCE BLUE) MUG
STAR TREK (ENGINEERING RED) MUG
ALL £5.99 FROM ALLTHEHEROES.CO.UK





Monstrously Good T-SHIRTS...

If you have more of an appetite for destruction than for caffeine-based drinks, then this retro Japanese poster **Godzilla** shirt from **alltheheroes.co.uk** is the perfect way to celebrate Toho's upcoming **Godzilla** film... aside from kicking over mountains of Lego cities while roaring in the style of the Big G (oh come on, we've all done it). Just last year the King of the Monsters reclaimed his crown in Gareth Edwards' Legendary Pictures reboot, but this shirt embraces the radioactive reptile's esteemed Japanese heritage and is certainly one for the kaijū fan to look out for. Think of this as the ample opportunity to show off your lizard love!

Speaking of eye-popping shirts (or hoodies if you are so inclined) though, how's about a chest-popping (or rather bursting) one? Well, the folks over at

BlueCyborg.com have given the much-used evolution of man image the ultimate sci-fi makeover, with added rib cage busting and egg hatching. The shirt practically replaces the evolution of man with the formation of the good ol' Xenomorph. We wonder if Neill Blomkamp might get in the mood and invest in one of these? It goes without saying that this shirt (available in multiple colours) is a reward for **Alien** fans! Warning: not resistant to acid.

If the destruction you had in mind was more of the dental variety, then this Honey Monster Sugar Puffs Tee is the one for you. A bowl of which would probably go down frighteningly well with that cup of coffee we made earlier...

EVOLUTION OF THE ALIEN SHIRT £12.95
FROM **BLUECYBORG.COM**

GODZILLA (JAPANESE POSTER) T-SHIRT £9.99
FROM **ALLTHEHEROES.CO.UK**

HONEY MONSTER SUGAR PUFFS T-SHIRT £19.99
FROM **TRUFFLESHUFFLE.CO.UK**



ROAD WARRIORS' Diecast to Die For

It has been a prominently petrol-fuelled and chaotic issue and to that point allow us to once again draw your

attention to objects of the four-wheeled variety in this piece of merchandise from **MiniModelFilmStuff.co.uk** that is the



perfect balance of madness and majesty. So before Tom Hardy takes the wheel in the upcoming **Mad Max: Fury Road**, this Diecast Model Car Set (presented in a classy display case) reminds us of what came before. The models included in this neat set are the Ford Falcon GT (Mad Max Interceptor) and Ford Landau (Enemy Car), both vehicles featured in George Miller's classic sequel **Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior** and, while small (1:43 scale), are a great item for those mad about Max. Plus it's way safer than actually going out on the long, winding and dystopian roads and facing hellacious odds on your journey (or travelling on the M50 at 5pm in the afternoon... same difference).

MAD MAX 2 CAR SET DIECAST MODEL
CAR FROM **MAD MAX 2** - £89.99 FROM
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STARBURST: EVENT PROFILE



WORDS & PHOTOS: MARTIN UNSWORTH



Some of the biggest names from the comic book world descended on the ExCel Centre in the heart of London's Docklands district at the beginning of March. The two-day London Super Comic Convention is now in its third year, and has firmly established itself on the UK con scene. Having Stan Lee the guest of honour at your first event couldn't harm things could it?

This year saw the biggest selection of artists, writers and publishers attend, along with the usual array of dealers. The big draws this year were John Romita, Jr., who followed in the footsteps of his father at Marvel and has become an important figure in his own right, and Neal Adams, whose work has graced both DC and Marvel including the fondly-remembered *Superman vs. Muhammad Ali* special from the '70s. Preacher co-creator Garth Ennis and TV personality-turned-comic-writer Jonathan Ross also proved a big draw for the fans. Other publishers and artists were in heavy attendance, including many famous names from 2000 AD, and *World War Z* creator Max Brooks.

Three areas were allocated for panels, with many of the artists sharing their experience of working in the industry, and the different disciplines of the art form. As somewhat of a departure, there was also an auction conducted by *Storage Hunters* star Sean Kelly whose fast-talking skills impressed those looking for some memorabilia at bargain prices.

What strikes you when walking around both the hall and the surrounding building (ExCel is made up of several exhibition spaces and several places to eat and drink in among his sprawling grounds) is the spirit of community that prevails within the fandom. Everybody's there to enjoy themselves, and there was lots of money being raised for some important charities.

The cosplay element of the event was, as always, a big draw for the audience. Many attended dressed as their favourite characters, and a selection of 'career' cosplayers were in attendance, happily mingling, posing and signing. A cosplay competition saw several heats over the



weekend, with a closing championship bringing the event to a close on Sunday.

STARBURST was in attendance in an official capacity this year and managed to ensure as many people as possible left with a copy of the magazine. We were also happy to see and meet so many readers, who came over to say how much they've been enjoying our new look. We also had visits from both Jonathan Ross and Neal Adams, as well as funnyman Johnny Vegas, who was at the Con with his son, and enjoying every moment of it himself.

The Sunday did see a small drop in attendance, but considering the previous day had been immensely busy, it's not surprising. Many people came on both days, some even dressing in different costumes, and once the entry queue died down (as these events become even more popular it's a given that the general entry queue can snake around venues), it became clear that some people had just come to see what the fuss was about. Hopefully, they left with a positive impression, and certainly one to dispel the stereotypical image people have of comic fans.

With the comic con scene getting bigger, there's a risk of overkill or saturation. By focussing primarily on the comic aspect (while also encouraging the cosplay), London Super Comic Con puts itself above its main competitors, being undiluted by other media, and concentrating on the sequential arts. And long may it continue.



STARBURST: EVENT PROFILE



WORDS: ED FORTUNE
PHOTOS: ANNE DAVIES

Scarborough has been a high quality holiday destination for the discerning traveller since the 17th Century, so it should come as absolutely no surprise to anyone that they know how to throw a party. Now in its second year, Sci-Fi Scarborough distinguishes itself from the herd by proving that the people of Scarborough have all the local knowledge and talent required to run a national event.

Located at The Spa Complex, the event was packed to the gills with things to do. The unique venue meant that rather than simply having a single area, there were plenty of spaces to explore, each holding their own delights. The main hall featured top level creators, such as PJ Holden and David Hine, as well as a plethora of local talent and multiple indie filmmakers, including the rather entertaining Redshirt Films. The hall also hosted the likes of David Prowse, Sophie Aldred and Virginia Hey and in addition to the panels, there was plenty of opportunity to rub shoulders with the great and the good from the kingdom of cult geekdom. The carefully planned layout allowed for people to take it easy and enjoy the sea air whilst exploring the grand world of sci-fi and fantasy at the same time.

A crèche of sorts was provided by Krash Labs and YouTuber, PerpetualJordan; one room was dedicated to rows and rows of PCs running the popular videogame *Minecraft*. Pre-teen geeks were utterly

absorbed in the game, allowing other family members to find other delights.

Entertainment was also provided by nearby schools and colleges. In addition to orchestral renditions of popular sci-fi tunes, the entire outdoor arena area was devoted to young performers rocking out. Seeing bands of young people perform popular rock anthems whilst dressed as *Star Wars* and *Marvel* heroes really hammered home the idea that this convention was a clever mix of home-grown talent and world class sci-fi professionals.

The craft and design talents from those in the area were also on display. From the R2 units in the main hall to a wide variety of costumes and props in the Guest Room. *Thunderbirds* fans were treated especially well; not only did we get a an eyeful of all sorts of Gerry Anderson-style puppets and models, Jamie Anderson was also on hand to talk about the world of all things Anderson, and Young Adult action-adventure author M.G. Harris teamed up with Jamie to talk about their latest project, *Gemini Force One*, a series of books about a team of international agents who perform daring rescues.

Film festivals tend to be a common feature at these sort of events, and Sci-Fi Scarborough was no exception. It was a mixed selection of mostly small movies, some great, some not so. It suffered from a lack of talks before each piece, but the cinema venue itself was very comfortable and it proved to be a great place to take a moment and relax.

The friendly, welcoming atmosphere was also a key feature of the event. People from across the area had turned up to be involved. As one local food vendor put it "You'd have to be mad to turn down a chance to give *Darth Vader* some fish and chips." The sense of fun was infectious and everyone had a smile on their face.

Saturday night is party night. The hall was quickly turned into a dance floor whilst attendees took to the bar for a swift pint or three whilst participating in an appropriately geeky quiz. The addition of an enormous *Darth Vader* cake (produced by local bakers, of course) added to the fun, and everyone got a chance to have a boogie.

Sci-Fi Scarborough has employed a unique approach to event organising that looks like it will stand the test of time. 2015 may well be the year of the comic con, and though many events may come and go, Sci-Fi Scarborough looks here to stay and we look forward to being there again next year and in the years to come.



it's only a movie

a column by JORDAN ROYCE



"Next time CHAPPIE, use scissors to cut his hair!"

As I left the screening of **CHAPPIE**, a good friend of mine issued some sagely wisdom, "There isn't anybody in the world good looking enough to get away with the haircuts in that movie!" He seriously does have a point there! At least they didn't give CHAPPIE a mulleted hair piece! Follicular madness aside, there are a few problems with **CHAPPIE**, and yet I found more to like than most other reviewers when dissecting Neill Blomkamp's robo-excursion.

CHAPPIE is a simple yarn and in my opinion benefits from this. Slumdog builds CHAPPIE, who is then kidnapped by Ninja and Yo-Landi from Die Antwoord. CHAPPIE is then torn between his programming that prohibits the commission of crime, and the peer pressure from "Mommie" Yo-Landi and "Daddie" Ninja to do the exact opposite. A mulleted Wolverine at the weapons factory where Slumdog works sees CHAPPIE as just the ticket to gain a cheeky promotion and sets out to mess things up. Thus unfolds a simple tale of bad hair and artificial intelligence.

Once you get through some ropey CGI and B-movie dialogue in the first half hour, CHAPPIE quickly becomes a fun watch. CHAPPIE himself is a character that you root for from the outset. I really wouldn't listen to the chumps that are labelling him as being reminiscent of Jar Jar Binks. These clowns are just admitting to their complete lack of

intelligence, and ability to actually watch what is on screen. Just leave them to download their opinions from their troll-infested forums of choice. In truth, CHAPPIE himself is a very well realised creation, brought to life effectively by the talented Sharlto Copley (here giving that Gollum bloke a run for his money). Copley proficiently imbues CHAPPIE with the inquisitiveness of ET and all the verve of Johnny Five.

Performances are also pretty solid throughout, barring Ninja and Yo-Landi, who improve around the half-way point, when they seem to realise that they are in a movie and need to act and stuff. This midway point is also where the dialogue and special effects seem to improve exponentially.

It's important to remember that **CHAPPIE** is not attempting some philosophical journey into the meaning of life, and the consequences of its artificial creation. It's a simple tale of the outsider and his emergence from being the underdog. CHAPPIE is a good vehicle for this plight, and the time spent focusing on him works extremely well. CHAPPIE is likeable and entertaining, and has you feeling every ounce of pain and happiness right alongside him. Particularly effective is the difficulty he feels navigating the opposing views of his surrogate parents. Scenes that will resonate with anyone who grew up in an environment permeated with parental discord.

Ok, so what are my problems with **CHAPPIE**? Well, I feel strongly that ending the movie with an action motif and not attempting to resolve *any* of the big questions raised is a mighty cop out. This stops **CHAPPIE** from stepping up to the next level of cultdom in my opinion, and sets its ceiling at being merely entertaining. Instead, it's left to us to decide whether CHAPPIE himself was the inevitable future or merely a cautionary footnote. Interestingly, Neill Blomkamp is intending to continue the tale of CHAPPIE across another two movies. Now despite surprisingly negative reviews, **CHAPPIE** is actually limping slowly into profit. Enough to lock in this proposed trilogy? Doubtful, which is a shame as I feel that the best part of the saga was about to kick in just as the credits started to roll.

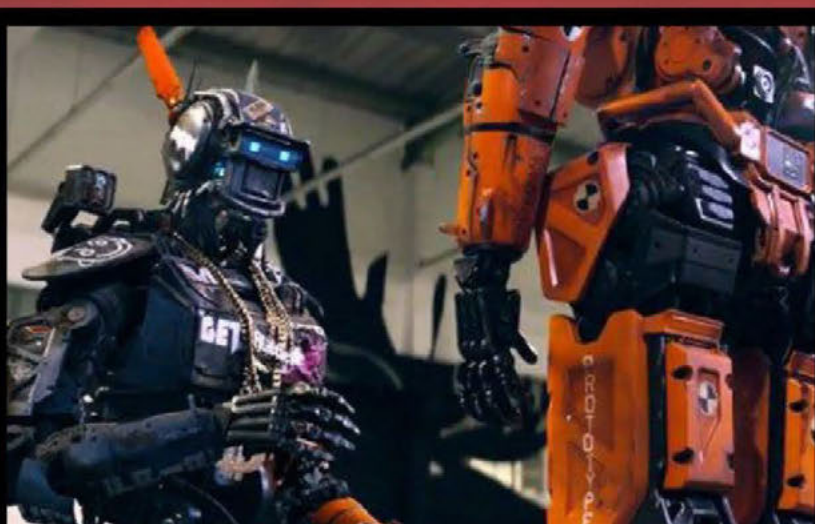
So why is there so much hate for poor **CHAPPIE**? I think the trailer didn't help by selling it as borderline hard sci-fi. Putting off the mainstream bozos, and working up the geeks into expecting the further adventures of the Star Child from **2001: A Space Odyssey**. Ultimately, **CHAPPIE** is just a fun story with a likable robot. Viewed in this context it entertains and is worth a watch if robots are your thang (apologies for my crude attempt to fit in some last minute *gangsta lingo*).

It's with nothing short of dismay that I cast an eye over the latest shenanigans of the Broccoli camp and the release of the first teaser trailer for upcoming Bond flick, **S.P.E.C.T.R.E.** Now I need to warn you firmly that what I am about to discuss is actually proving to be accurate, so you may want to avoid reading any further for fear of SPOILERS! Are we clear on this? SPOILERS!, SPOILERS!, SPOILERS! Any chumps that are still reading at this point and then write in to complain will be subjected to a toffee hammer being inserted in a place that may restrict the free passage of bowel movements...

Most people are aware that **S.P.E.C.T.R.E.** and its head honcho, Mr Ernst Stavro Blofeld, have always been the main villains of the Fleming novels (once he got **S.M.E.R.S.H.** out of his system). Providing Bond with an evil terrorist organisation headed up by his *Moriarty*. The early movies followed suit, and other than **Goldfinger**, the main narrative in the first seven movies was the ongoing struggle

with Blofeld and his goons. During this period, Eon Productions introduced many of the traits that are now synonymous with the archetypal Bond villain. White cat, colourful henchmen, holding the world to ransom, and after **You Only Live Twice**, an exotic and absurd lair was absolutely necessary. Even in the late sixties, the building of that volcano lair alone would have been classed as the Eighth Wonder of the World! This is a template that has run amok through fantasy spy culture. Even those of us currently enjoying the battle against Hydra in the MCU are looking at a S.P.E.C.T.R.E. knock-off (albeit a superb one), created when Marvel Comics needed a challenge for their newly *Bondardised* Nick Fury. **Sadly**, despite a cameo in **For Your Eyes Only**, Roger Moore and his successors never got to lock horns with Blofeld. The rights to the character held ironically to ransom by the slimy Kevin McClory, who exaggerated his input to a meeting with Fleming in which Blofeld and co. were created. Happily, the talentless, leeching bastard is dead now, so it was only going to be a matter of time before the ultimate bad guys were back...

This brings us to the elephant in the Bond room – the ironic *spectre* of **Austin Powers**. Many years ago, I mentioned how impossible it would be to reintroduce the Blofeld of the sixties' Bond movies as the character of Dr Evil had made this a disastrous move to even contemplate. Parody has great power and just as real people try to tone down the mannerisms that comedians have chosen to imitate, the Bond movies could never have gone back to a bald megalomaniac stroking a white cat. Rumours were circulating however, and it did seem that after the success of **Skyfall**, Eon Productions wanted to introduce the element that had been missing from the mythos since 1971. The announcement of the title **S.P.E.C.T.R.E.** confirmed that these rumours had plenty of substance, and the casting of the excellent Christoph Waltz seemingly as the main bad guy seemed to confirm that a modern take on Blofeld was under construction. It took a cyber-attack on Sony Pictures to completely undermine this optimistic assumption, and leave critics the world over scratching their heads



Suddenly CHAPPIE began to experience the emotion called inadequacy...

in disbelief at a major plot twist that Eon Productions seemed about to inflict...

The actual script for **S.P.E.C.T.R.E.** is a mind bending thing to behold, offering an illuminating insight into the role of the suits in the creative filmmaking process. The script is littered with comments from high-ups at Sony who seemed none too pleased with this *slam-dunk* follow-up to **Skyfall** that completely falls apart in the third act when the action dries up and the convoluted plot strands fail to marry convincingly up. Page after page there are scribbles of "change this", and "lose that!" But the worst was yet to come. A peruse of the final act reveals that Blofeld was indeed Bond's foster care half-brother! You read that right. After all of this rigid adherence to a more grounded Bond sans gadgets and overblown fantasy elements, they chose to copy the ending of **Austin Powers: Goldmember**. An ending that was so farfetched and badly received that it actually brought about the early retirement of Austin Powers, and the cancellation of the planned fourth and final installment.

After watching the otherwise intriguing **S.P.E.C.T.R.E.** trailer, it actually does appear that they are going to make Bond and Blofeld literally bros. This has caused Bond fans the world over to have meltdowns, and I totally get where they are coming from. It's the worst idea since Harry Saltzman originally suggested that Connery's Bond have plastic surgery to throw off his enemies, and could emerge from beneath bandages looking like George Lazenby. This is a franchise damaging idea that will be very hard to dial back from. It's puerile and stupid, and I cannot believe they are running with this.

Apparently, all of the suits at Sony agree and a month after the start of filming there were major script and overall plot revisions underway. This yet another foray into the *closed universe* of modern film writers who cannot accept coincidence or simple side effects of human nature. People have to know each other from the past in order to gain more significance, which is bollocks. Blofeld made Bond his target in **From Russia with Love** purely because he killed his sidekick Dr No and cost him a shitload of money. Which sounds a lot more natural than going after him due to some strange sibling rivalry, or whatever the motive will be in the final draft. As I have stated before, the rot set in with Burton's **Batman** and the Joker killing the Waynes. Now modern day screenwriters contort themselves into knots, trying to figure out some way for the main conflict to stretch back as far as the womb! If you were happy that Clark Kent met Lex Luthor as kids in the TV series **Smallville**, then you might just appreciate this latest debacle. Not that the Austin Powers reveal was the only cause for concern at Sony.

Apparently, Sony execs were also pleading for some action in the final third of the movie, where suddenly it gets bogged down in plot resolution and is desperately in need of a decent set-piece. A dire assessment of a movie with a \$300M budget. There is obviously plenty of time to repair some of this damage, but the trailer does suggest that the main twist is going to remain. We can only hope it is still altered in some way because for the first time, I'm siding with both the suits at Sony and the geeks on the message boards.

Jordan Royce can be contacted at jordan.royce@starburstmagazine.com and hosts the STARBURST RADIO SHOW every Wednesday 9pm until 11pm GMT on Fab Radio International – www.fabradiointernational.com also available from iTunes as a Podcast

Bond faces his ultimate nemesis - A really bad script!

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